




# Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

**F. V. N. Painter**

**DODO**



**PRESS**



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2022 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

ELEMENTARY GUIDE TO LITERARY CRITICISM

BY

F. V. N. PAINTER, A.M., D.D.

PROFESSOR OF MODERN LANGUAGES IN ROANOKE  
COLLEGE AUTHOR OF "A HISTORY OF EDUCATION,"  
"HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE," "INTRODUCTION TO  
AMERICAN LITERATURE," ETC.

1903

LIBRARIES  
WITHDRAWN FROM STOCK

LIBRARIES  
WITHDRAWN FROM STOCK





## PREFACE

The aim of the present work, as is indicated by its name, is to help the young student in literary criticism. It is a sort of laboratory manual, in which he will find specific direction for a comprehensive analysis of the principal kinds of literature. It is intended to show him the various points in relation to form, content, and spirit, to which in succession he is to devote his attention. It is hoped that the book will give definiteness and delight to literary study, which, for lack of such a guide, has so often been vague, unsatisfactory, and discouraging.

A glance at the table of contents will clearly reveal the plan. The work is divided into three parts, the first of which treats of fundamental principles. In three chapters the nature of criticism, the relation of the author to his work, and the æsthetic principles underlying literary art are briefly discussed. The facts and principles here presented are designed to give a clearer and deeper insight into the nature and processes of criticism.

Part Second is chiefly concerned with the external elements of literature. In three chapters it briefly discusses the diction, the various kinds of sentences, the use of figures of speech, and the different species of style as determined partly by the nature of the discourse and partly by the mental endowments of the writer. It is intended to embrace the rhetorical elements of form.

In Part Third the leading kinds of literature are discussed, and the general principles governing each are presented. Special effort has been made to throw light upon the nature and structure of poetry, fiction, and the drama; and it is hoped that the chapters in which these subjects are treated will be found particularly interesting and helpful.

Each chapter is followed by a list of review questions and by illustrative and practical exercises. The aim has been to prepare not merely a theoretical but especially a practical text-book, for which, it is believed, there exists a felt and acknowledged need. It is hoped

that this little work will contribute in some measure to make literature one of the most delightful, as it is surely one of the most important, of all branches of study.

F. V. N. PAINTER.

SALEM, VIRGINIA,

August 15, 1903.

# CONTENTS

## PART FIRST

### FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

#### CHAPTER

- I. NATURE AND OFFICE OF CRITICISM
- II. THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORK
- III. SOME ÆSTHETIC PRINCIPLES

## PART SECOND

### RHETORICAL ELEMENTS

- IV. WORDS, SENTENCES, PARAGRAPHS
- V. FIGURES OF SPEECH
- VI. STYLE

## PART THIRD

### KINDS OF LITERATURE

- VII. NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF POETRY
- VIII. KINDS OF POETRY
- IX. EPIC AND DRAMATIC POETRY
- X. NATURE AND FORMS OF PROSE
- XI. ESSAYS AND ORATORY
- XII. NATURE AND CLASSIFICATION OF FICTION





## LITERARY CRITICISM

### PART FIRST

#### FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

#### CHAPTER I

#### NATURE AND OFFICE OF CRITICISM

1. *Purpose of Literary Study.* The study or reading of literature ordinarily has a threefold purpose, —knowledge, pleasure, and culture. This purpose shows us both the character of the literature which should be read and the manner in which it should be read. As a rule we should read only books of recognized excellence, and read them with sympathetic intelligence. Trashy books, whatever pleasure they may give, add but little to knowledge or culture; and immoral books often leave an ineradicable stain upon the soul. Fortunately there are good books enough to satisfy every taste and supply every need.

2. *Necessity of Comprehending.* A literary work cannot be of much use till it is understood. It is useless to read books entirely beyond our grasp. In the perusal of an author we should endeavor to enter as fully as possible into his thoughts and feelings. Our primary aim should be not to criticise but to comprehend. This is sometimes, especially for the young student, a difficult task. It requires patient, painstaking labor; but in the end it brings a rich reward in profit, enjoyment, and power.

In the study of a literary classic we should aim at more than a mere intellectual apprehension of its technique and other external features. The soul should rise into sympathy with it, and feel its spiritual beauty. All literary study that falls short of this high end, however scholarly or laborious it may be, is essentially defective. The externalities of a piece of literature are comprehended in vain, unless they lead to a fuller understanding and appreciation of its spirit and life. Unfortunately, at the present time, philology and literary analysis frequently stop short of the realization of the supreme end of literary study. What should be only a means is sometimes exalted to an end.

3. *Definition of Criticism.* Criticism, as its etymology indicates, is the act of judging. Literary criticism endeavors to form a correct estimate of literary productions. Its endeavor is to see a piece of writing as it is. It brings literary productions into comparison with recognized principles and ideal standards; it investigates them in their matter, form, and spirit; and, as a result of this process, it determines their merits and their defects. The end of literary criticism is not fault-finding but truth. The critic should be more than a censor or cavalier. He should discover and make known whatever is commendable or excellent. At its best, criticism is not a mere record of general impressions but the statement of an intelligent judgment. It is not biased or vitiated by prejudice, ignorance, or self-interest; but, proceeding according to well-defined principles, it is able to trace the steps by which it reaches its ultimate conclusions.

4. *History of Criticism.* Criticism is a natural attendant of all forms of art. Literary criticism is almost as old as literature itself. No sooner had a writer produced a literary work, even in the most ancient times, than his contemporaries proceeded to express their judgments concerning it. Among the ancient Greeks Plato and Aristotle were both critics; and the latter's work on "*Poetics*" is still valuable for its discussion of fundamental principles. Quintilian, Cicero, and Horace were distinguished Roman critics; and the poet's *Ars Poetica*, read in every college course, is an admirable presentation of many critical principles. But it is in modern times, and particularly during the nineteenth century, that criticism received its highest development. In England not a few of its leading literary men—Dryden, Pope, Addison, Johnson, Coleridge, Jeffrey, Macaulay, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold—have been critics; and in America we meet with such honored names as Poe, Emerson, Whipple, Lowell, Stedman, and many others. In recent years criticism has greatly gained in breadth and geniality.

5. *Standard of Criticism.* All criticism involves comparison. For every species of literature there is an ideal of form, content, and spirit, which serves the intelligent critic as a standard of judgment. This ideal is based on a realization of the recognized principles of literary art. These principles pertain to *diction*, *structure*, *matter*, and *spirit* or *purpose*. No one will deny that the diction should be well chosen; that the structure of the sentences should be correct and clear; and that, in the case of poetry, the laws of versification should be observed. These elements contribute to excellence of form. In addition to these external elements there should be unity of thought, symmetry of



presentation, truth of statement, and sincerity and self-restraint in sentiment. These elements give substantial worth to the matter or content of literature. Besides all this there is a grace or elegance or force, proceeding from the personality of the writer and transcending all rules of art, that gives a peculiar charm to the best literature. Sometimes the personal element or spirit of a work is so pleasing that it more than counterbalances defects of form, and wins its way to the popular heart.

6. *Classic Writers.* Our classic writers are those who have most nearly approached the ideal. The writings of Addison, Goldsmith, Irving, Lowell, and others, embody in a high degree excellence of matter and form; and in addition to this there is a pervading spirit that imparts an irresistible charm to their works. While the works of no one writer, whether ancient or modern, can be taken as an absolute standard of judgment, the perusal of classic works is exceedingly helpful. These works familiarize us with what is excellent in thought, expression, and spirit. They cultivate the taste; and at length it becomes impossible for the student to be satisfied with what is incorrect, slovenly, tawdry, or untruthful.

7. *Requisites of Criticism.* Many things are required for the best criticism. First of all, the critic ought to be a person of sound judgment. It is in a measure true that critics, like poets, "are born, not made." The critic should have the power to divest himself of prejudice; and, like a judge upon the bench, should decide every question by the law and the evidence. He should be a man of broad sympathies and wide culture; nothing that is human should be foreign to him. He should be able to enter into the feelings of every class and to appreciate the principles of every school. He should have a strong imagination to enable him to realize the conditions of other ages or of other social arrangements. Without these natural gifts of a sound judgment, broad sympathy, and vigorous imagination, the critic is apt to be limited, narrow, or unjust in his criticism. The history of literature reveals numberless critical blunders; indeed, almost every attempt to introduce new literary forms, as in the case of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats, has met with bitter opposition from uncatholic critics.

8. *Criticism an Acquired Art.* Criticism is an art that may in large measure be acquired. The requisite faculties may be developed by a course of study. The principles that are to guide the critical judgment are provided in grammar, rhetoric, logic, æsthetics, and moral

science. Wide reading in various departments will banish narrowness and provincialism. Study and experience will bring a cosmopolitan culture. Though few are capable of attaining to eminence as critics, it is possible for every one to acquire some degree of literary taste and to form an intelligent judgment of a literary work.

9. *Diversity in Criticism.* Diversity of judgment is a notable feature in the history of criticism. It tends to shake one's confidence in the critical art. It often happens that what one critic praises another condemns. This fact has been presented by Irving, with delightful humor. "Even the critics," he says in the conclusion of the "Sketch Book," "whatever may be said of them by others, the author has found to be a singularly gentle and good-natured race; it is true that each has in turn objected to some one or two articles, and that these individual exceptions, taken in the aggregate, would amount almost to a total condemnation of his work; but then he has been consoled by observing, that what one has particularly censured, another has as particularly praised; and thus, the encomiums being set off against the objections, he finds his work, upon the whole, commended far beyond its deserts."

10. *Sources of Diversity.* This diversity of literary criticism, which at first sight tempts us to question the value of the art, is easily traced to its causes. These are found not in the nature of the art but in the manner of its application. Many reviewers nowadays do not take the pains to read the works they pass judgment upon. Their estimate is based on little more than a rapid survey of the preface and table of contents. This fact renders a considerable part of current newspaper criticism comparatively worthless. It is still worse when to this superficiality is added a flippant manner that seems intent on nothing but a display of the critic's smartness. Other critics write from the standpoint of a particular sect or school of thought, and undervalue or overvalue a work through a partisan spirit. Defective or erroneous principles are used as standards of judgment. Still others are impressionists; and instead of testing a work by recognized critical canons, they simply record how "it strikes them." Differences of taste and character naturally produce some diversity of view, but in general the painstaking and impartial application of critical principles to a literary work will yield pretty uniform results. The merits and defects of the work will be brought to light, and conscientious and broad-minded critics will be found in the main to agree in their praise or their censure.



11. *Utility of Criticism.* Criticism is not, as has sometimes been supposed, a parasitic growth on literature. It is a handmaid of literature; it belongs to the household of literature. Though it does not deserve to rank with the great creative forms of literature, such as the epic, the drama, or the novel, it is capable of a high degree of excellence. Some of the greatest English writers, as we have seen, have been critics. Not a few of the critical essays of De Quincey, Macaulay, Carlyle, Arnold, Lowell, and others, have an honorable place in the literature of the English-speaking world.

Literary criticism has a distinct value for three classes of persons. To the young student it gives a clear insight into literary form, and cultivates his taste for literary excellence. To the author it is at once a stimulant and wholesome restraint; it rewards him for what is good and chastises him for what is bad. To the public it is useful in pointing out what books are worth reading and in showing the principles by which a work is to be judged. It elevates the popular taste and intelligence.

12. *Materials of Criticism.* All literature is, in some sense, material for criticism. It may be examined, tested by critical laws, and its worth estimated in the class to which it belongs. But as a rule literary criticism is confined to literature in the narrower sense; that is to say, to literature that aims at artistic excellence. This includes the various forms of poetry and the principal kinds of prose, —history, oratory, essays, and fiction. These various kinds of literature, in their higher forms, aim at presenting their subject-matter in such a way as to minister to the pleasure of the reader.

13. *Molding Influences.* In criticising it is important to recognize certain general molding influences in literature. Among the most potent of these influences are *race*, *epoch*, and *surroundings*. We cannot fully understand any work of literature, nor justly estimate its relative excellence, without an acquaintance with the national traits of the writer, the general character of the age in which he lived, and the physical and social conditions by which he was surrounded. These considerations, independently of specific critical canons that determine intrinsic excellence, must be taken into account when the critic wishes to decide upon the relative value of a work. It is evidently unjust to demand in writers of an uncultivated period the same delicacy of thought, feeling, and expression that is required in the writers of an age of refinement and intelligence. The indecencies

in Chaucer and Shakespeare are to be attributed to the grossness of their times.

14. *The Artistic Element.* There is an artistic element in literature upon which the value of any work largely depends. There is art in the choice and marshaling of words. Furthermore, every department of literature—history, poetry, fiction—has a separate and definite purpose. In the successful realization of this purpose each species or form of literature must wisely choose its means. This conscious and intelligent adaptation of a means to an end is art. Apart from the careful selection and arrangement of words in sentences, the historian chooses the incidents he will relate, the order in which they will appear, the relative prominence they will have, and the symmetry and completeness of his whole work. The novelist selects or invents his story, portrays from actual life or creates a number of characters, constructs or modifies his plot, and unfolds the movement toward a predestined end. In all this there is a constant exercise of the creative faculty; and the complete product is as much a work of art as is a painting or statue, which requires the same sort of intellectual effort.

15. *Matter and Form.* In any literary production we may distinguish between the *thoughts* that are presented and the *manner* in which they are presented. We may say, for example, "The joys of heaven are infinite"; or, ascending to a higher plane of thought and feeling, we may present the same thought in the language of Moore in his "Paradise and the Peri":

"Go, wing thy flight from star to star,  
From world to luminous world, as far  
As the universe spreads its flaming wall;  
Take all the pleasures of all the spheres,  
And multiply each through endless years,—  
One minute of Heaven is worth them all."

It is thus evident that the interest and worth of literature depend largely on the manner in which the thought and emotion are expressed. In general the *matter* of discourse, which aims at the communication of ideas, is of more importance than the *form*. Words without thought, no matter how skillfully and musically they may be arranged, are nonsense. But in the lighter sorts of prose, which aim at entertainment, and in poetry, which is dependent on meter and harmony, *form* is of preëminent importance. The story of "Rip Van

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Winkle, " for instance, owes its perennial charm to the inimitable grace and humor with which Irving has told it.

There is a natural and intimate relation between *matter* and *form*; one is the soul, the other is the body. Form is not to be unduly magnified by itself; it is excellent only when it is a fitting embodiment of the thought and feeling expressed. Form should be molded by the thought and emotion, as the rose or oak is shaped by the potency of its inner life. When, in any way, the form is out of keeping with the subject, the effect upon a cultivated taste is a disagreeable incongruity. In the language of Horace, —

"Sad words befit the brow with grief o'erhung;  
Anger, that fires the eyeball, bids the tongue  
Breathe proud defiance; sportive jest and jeer  
Become the gay; grave maxims the severe."

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the threefold object of literary study? What kind of literature should be read? Why? 2. What should be our primary aim in studying an author? What does this often require? What should be aimed at besides outward form? What mistake is frequently made? 3. What is criticism? What is the purpose of literary criticism? How is this purpose accomplished? What sources of error are mentioned? 4. What is said of the history of criticism? Name two Greek critics. Who were the great Roman critics? Mention some distinguished English and American critics. What is said of recent criticism? 5. What serves as a standard of criticism? On what is this ideal based? Mention some elements of excellent *form*; some elements of excellent *content*. What is said of the personal element or spirit? 6. Who are our classic writers? Why study classic works? 7. What natural gifts should a critic have? Why should he have broad sympathies? What is said of critical blunders? 8. How is criticism an acquired art? What is the advantage of wide reading? What may every one hope to acquire? 9. What is said of diversity in criticism? Illustrate. 10. What are the sources of diversity? What is said of much newspaper criticism? What is meant by *impressionists*? What is said of painstaking and impartial criticism? 11. What is said of the relation of criticism to literature? What of its rank? For what three classes has it a special value? How? 12. What are the materials of literary criticism? To what class of literature is it chiefly devoted? 13. Name three great molding influences. Why should they be considered? Illustrate. 14. What is

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

meant by the *artistic element*? In what does the historian's art consist? the novelist's? 15. What may be distinguished in any literary production? Illustrate. On what does the worth of literature largely depend? Which is the more important, *matter* or *form*? Where is *form* specially important? Illustrate. What is the relation of *matter* to *form*? When the *form* is out of keeping with the *matter*, what is the result?

### ILLUSTRATIVE AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES

The following critiques should be studied with the view of answering such questions as these:

Does the critic seek the truth? Is he prejudiced? Is he chiefly concerned with *matter* or *form*? Is his judgment sound? Is he broad or narrow in his sympathies? Does he judge by mere impressions? Is he superficial or thorough? Does he belong to a particular school? Is his criticism in any way helpful? Does he try to interpret the author? Is he chiefly concerned to show his own learning or brilliancy? Is he genial and tolerant? Is he dogmatic and intolerant? Is he courteous and kind? Is he ill-mannered and unkind? What points are criticised?

#### HEADLEY'S "SACRED MOUNTAINS"

The *Reverend* Mr. Headley (why *will* he not put his full title in his title-pages? ) has in his "Sacred Mountains" been reversing the facts of the old fable about the mountains that brought forth the mouse—*parturiunt montes; nascitur ridiculus mus*—for in this instance it appears to be the mouse—the little *ridiculus mus*—that has been bringing forth the "mountains," and a great litter of them, too. —POE.

#### BYRON'S "HOURS OF IDLENESS"

The poesy of this young Lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit. Indeed, we do not recollect to have seen a quantity of verse with so few deviations in either direction from that exact standard. His effusions are spread over a dead flat, and can no more get above or below the level, than if they were so much stagnant water. As an extenuation of this offence, the noble author is peculiarly forward in pleading minority. We have it in the title-page, and on the very back of the volume; it follows his name like a favorite part of his style. Much stress is laid upon it in the preface, and the poems are connected with this general statement of his case,



by particular dates, substantiating the age at which each was written.  
—LORD BROUGHAM in *Edinburgh Review*.

### KEATS'S "ENDYMION"

The author is a copyist of Mr. Hunt, but ten times more tiresome than his prototype; his nonsense is gratuitous, he writes it for its own sake, and more than rivals the insanity of his master. He writes at random the suggestions of his rhyme without having hardly a complete couplet to endorse a complete idea in the book. If any one should be bold enough to purchase it, and patient enough to get beyond the first book and find any meaning, we entreat him to make us acquainted with his success; we shall then return to the task which we now abandon in despair. — *Quarterly Review*.

### WORDSWORTH

The simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay  
As soft as evening in his favorite May;  
Who warns his friend "to shake off toil and trouble,  
And quit his books, for fear of growing double";  
Who, both by precept and example, shows  
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose;  
Convincing all, by demonstration plain,  
Poetic souls delight in prose insane,  
And Christmas stories, tortured into rhyme,  
Contain the essence of the true sublime;  
Thus, when he tells the tale of Betty Foy,  
The idiot mother of "an idiot boy,"  
A moon-struck silly lad who lost his way,  
And, like his bard, confounded night with day;  
So close on each pathetic part he dwells,  
And each adventure so sublimely tells,  
That all who view the "idiot in his glory,"  
Conceive the bard the hero of the story.  
BYRON in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers."

### CROKER'S EDITION OF BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

This work has greatly disappointed us. Whatever faults we may have been prepared to find in it, we fully expected that it would be a valuable addition to English literature; that it would contain many curious facts, and many judicious remarks; that the style of the notes

would be neat, clear, and precise; and that the typographical execution would be, as in new editions of classical works it ought to be, almost faultless. We are sorry to be obliged to say that the merits of Mr. Croker's performance are on a par with those of a certain leg of mutton on which Dr. Johnson dined, while travelling from London to Oxford, and which he, with characteristic energy, pronounced to be "as bad as bad could be, ill fed, ill killed, ill kept, and ill dressed." This edition is ill compiled, ill arranged, ill written, and ill printed. —MACAULAY in *Edinburgh Review*.

### CARLYLE

There is in Carlyle's fiercer and more serious passages a fiery glow of enthusiasm or indignation, in his lighter ones a quaint felicity of unexpected humor, in his expositions a vividness of presentment, in his arguments a sledge-hammer force, all of which are not to be found together anywhere else, and none of which is to be found anywhere in quite the same form. And despite the savagery, both of his indignation and his laughter, there is no greater master of tenderness. Wherever he is at home, and he seldom wanders far from it, the weapon of Carlyle is like none other, —it is the very sword of Goliath.

SAINTSBURY.

### GRAY

Against the right of Gray to be considered one of the leading English men of letters no more stringent argument has been produced than is founded upon the paucity of his published work. It has fairly been said that the springs of originality in the brain of a great inventive genius are bound to bubble up more continuously and in fuller volume than could be confined within the narrow bounds of the poetry of Gray. But the sterility of the age, the east wind of discouragement steadily blowing across the poet's path, had much to do with this apparent want of fecundity, and it would be an error to insist too strongly on a general feature of the century in this individual case. When we turn to what Gray actually wrote, although the bulk of it is small, we are amazed at the originality and variety, the freshness and vigor of the mind that worked thus tardily and in miniature. —GOSSE.

## SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare has no peculiarity, no importunate topic; but all is duly given; no views, no curiosities; no cow-painter, no bird-fancier, no mannerist is he: he has no discoverable egotism; the great he tells greatly; the small, subordinately. He is wise without emphasis or assertion; he is strong, as nature is strong, who lifts the land into mountain slopes without effort, and by the same rule as she floats a bubble in the air, and likes as well to do the one as the other. This makes that equality of power in farce, tragedy, narrative, and love-songs; a merit so incessant, that each reader is incredulous of the perception of other readers. —EMERSON.

## DOWDEN'S "LIFE OF SHELLEY"

This Shelley biography is a literary cake-walk. The ordinary forms of speech are absent from it. All the pages, all the paragraphs, walk by sedately, elegantly, not to say mincingly, in their Sunday-best, shiny and sleek, perfumed, and with *boutonnieres* in their button-holes; it is rare to find even a chance sentence that has forgotten to dress. If the book wishes to tell us that Mary Godwin, child of sixteen, had known afflictions, the fact saunters forth in this nobby outfit: "Mary herself was not unlearned in the lore of pain." —MARK TWAIN.

## MILTON'S "LYCIDAS"

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed, is "Lycidas"; of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers displeasing. What beauty there is we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arthur and Mincius, nor tells of rough satyrs and "fauns with cloven heel." Where there is leisure for fiction, there is little grief.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

## EMERSON

And, in truth, one of the legitimate poets Emerson, in my opinion, is not. His poetry is interesting, it makes one think; but it is not the poetry of one of the born poets. I say it of him with reluctance,

although I am sure that he would have said it of himself; but I say it with reluctance, because I dislike giving pain to his admirers, and because all my own wish, too, is to say of him what is favorable. But I regard myself, not as speaking to please Emerson's admirers, not as speaking to please myself; but rather, I repeat, as communing with Time and Nature concerning the productions of this beautiful and rare spirit, and as resigning what of him is by their unalterable decree touched with caducity, in order the better to mark and secure that in him which is immortal. —MATTHEW ARNOLD.

### GEORGE ELIOT

What peculiarities of George Eliot's are likely to leave a strong impress after her? I answer, she, of all novelists, has attacked the profound problems of our existence. She has taught that the mystery worthy of a great artist is not the shallow mystery device, but the infinite perspective of the great, dark enigmas of human nature; that there is a deeper interest in human life seen in the modern, scientific daylight, than in life viewed through a mist of ancient and dying superstitions; that the interest of human character transcends the interest of invented circumstances; that the epic story of a hero and a heroine is not so grand as the natural history of a community. She, first of all, has made cross sections of modern life, and shown us the busy human hive in the light of a great artistic and philosophic intellect. —EDWARD EGGLESTON.

### WORDSWORTH

He has won for himself a secure immortality by a depth of intuition which makes only the best minds at their best hours worthy, or indeed capable, of his companionship, and by a homely sincerity of human sympathy which reaches the humblest heart. Our language owes him gratitude for the habitual purity and abstinence of his style, and we who speak it, for having emboldened us to take delight in simple things, and to trust ourselves to our own instincts. —LOWELL.

### PARADISE LOST

It is requisite that the language of an heroic poem should be both perspicuous and sublime. In proportion as either of these two qualities is wanting, the language is imperfect. Perspicuity is the first and most necessary qualification; insomuch that a good-natured



reader sometimes overlooks a little slip even in the grammar or syntax, where it is impossible for him to mistake the poet's sense. Of this kind is that passage in Milton, wherein he speaks of Satan, —

“God and his Son except,  
Created thing nought valued he nor shunned,” —

and that in which he describes Adam and Eve, —

“Adam the goodliest man of men since born,  
His sons, the fairest of her daughters Eve.”

ADDISON.

### FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

From the first to the last page of Nietzsche's writings the careful reader seems to hear a madman, with flashing eyes, wild gestures, and foaming mouth, spouting forth deafening bombast; and through it all, now breaking out into frenzied laughter, now sputtering expressions of filthy abuse and invective, now skipping about in a giddy agile dance, and now bursting upon the auditors with threatening mien and clenched fists. So far as any meaning at all can be extracted from the endless stream of phrases, it shows, as its fundamental elements, a series of constantly reiterated delirious ideas, having their source in illusions of sense and diseased organic processes. Here and there emerges a distinct idea, which, as is always the case with the insane, assumes the form of an imperious assertion, a sort of despotic command.

MAX NORDAU.

### NOTE

In addition to these brief extracts the student should be encouraged or required to read a number of complete reviews both in our popular periodicals and in books of literary criticism, with the view of determining the critic's temper, culture, judgment, thoroughness, points of view, etc. The older style of criticism is illustrated in Addison's articles on Milton in the "Spectator" and Johnson's "Lives of the Poets." For the elaborate review style the student might read some of the critical essays of Macaulay, Carlyle, and Lowell. Our principal reviews, magazines, and other periodicals, as well as recent works on English literature, will supply abundant material to show the less elaborate and generally more genial criticism of the present day.

## CHAPTER II

### THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORK

16. *Personality of the Author.* Every literary work reveals, to a greater or less degree, the personality of the author. Every literary production may be regarded as the fruitage of the writer's spirit; and there is good authority for saying that "men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs from thistles." A book exhibits not only the attainments, culture, and literary art of the writer but also his intellectual force, emotional nature, and moral character. Wide attainments are revealed in breadth of view and in mastery of large resources. Culture is exhibited in a general delicacy of thought, feeling, and expression. Literary art is shown in the choice of words and in their arrangement in sentences and paragraphs. The artistic sense, without which a finished excellence is not attainable, reveals itself in the proportion, symmetry, and completeness of a work.

17. *Thought and Feeling.* The intellectual and the emotional nature of a writer is clearly reflected in his works. Intellectual force, for example, is recognized in the firm grasp of a subject, in the marshaling of details toward a predetermined end, and in the vigor of utterance. The Essays of Macaulay, however much they may lack in delicate refinement of thought and feeling, display a virile force of intellect; and many a page of Carlyle fairly throbs with energy of spirit. A large, sensitive soul manifests itself in sympathy with nature and human life. The "wee, modest, crimson-tipped" daisy, and the limping wounded hare touched the tender sympathies of Burns; and it was Wordsworth who said, —

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

There is no class of society, from kings to beggars, from queens to hags, with which Shakespeare has not entered into sympathy, thinking their thoughts and speaking their words.

18. *Moral Character.* The moral character of an author appears in his general attitude toward truth and life. A strong moral sense appears in a firm adherence to right and an unblinded condemnation of wrong. A genial, charitable spirit is shown in a kindly disposition to overlook the weaknesses of men and to magnify their virtues. Life

may be looked upon as something earnest, exalted, divine; or it may be regarded as insignificant, wretched, and ending at death.

It is character that gives fundamental tone to literature; and, as Matthew Arnold has said, the best results are not attainable without "high seriousness." The difference between the flippant and the earnest writer is easily and instinctively recognized. No one can read Ruskin, for instance, without feeling his sincerity and integrity, even in his most impracticable vagaries. In Addison, Goldsmith, and Irving we find a genial, uplifting amiability; and Whittier, in his deep love of human freedom and justice, appears as a resolute iconoclast and reformer.

*19. Authorship and Character.* It is sometimes supposed that the art of authorship can be divorced from the personality of the writer. In serious authorship this supposition is a mistake. The best writing is more than grace of rhetoric and refinement of intellectual culture. Back of all outward graces there is need of a right-thinking and truth-loving soul. One of the essential things in the training of a great writer is the development of an upright, noble character. Milton was right in maintaining that the great poet should make his life a noble poem. As a rule the writers of the world's greatest classics have been men of sincerity, truth, and honor. Such was the character of Plato, Vergil, Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, and many others. Our best American writers, almost without exception, have been distinguished for moral worth. In men like Burns, Byron, and Heine, the absence of a high moral purpose has detracted, in spite of their unquestioned intellectual power, from the excellence of a large part of their writings.

*20. Autobiographic Elements.* Our knowledge is of two kinds: the first comes from our own experience; the other, from the experience and testimony of our fellow-men. Personal experience carries with it a conviction and power that do not usually belong to the knowledge received from the testimony of others. What we have experienced has become a part of our lives. The writers of vitality and power are those who draw largely on their individual resources, —the treasures of their own experience. They write, not from the memory, but from the heart. If they borrow from others, they assimilate the information, and thus vitalize it before giving it out again.

The best part of our knowledge is that which comes to us through experience and assimilation. It is a permanent possession. When an

author's experience, either in an ideal or a realistic form, is introduced in his work, it becomes an interesting biographical element. It presents a part of his life, and often it exhibits the transforming and glorifying power of his genius. In the drama "*She Stoops to Conquer*," for example, Goldsmith has turned to excellent account a humiliating incident of his youth. His "*Deserted Village*" is full of childhood reminiscences. Scott's poems and novels are in large measure only an expansion of the mediæval and other lore that he enthusiastically collected in his youth and early manhood. George Eliot's earlier novels are filled with the scenes and characters of her early life; and Dickens's best novel, "*David Copperfield*," is largely autobiographical. An author's best work—that which possesses the greatest degree of interest and vitality—is generally that which springs from the treasure of his deepest experience, and is the fullest expression of his individual thought and feeling.

21. *View of Life.* Every writer of originality and power takes a fundamental view of life. He has settled convictions of some sort in regard to the world in which he lives. Sometimes this view comes from religion and sometimes from philosophy or science, though in any case it is apt to be influenced by the writer's physical condition. German philosophy has influenced many able writers, —Coleridge, Carlyle, Emerson, and others in England and America; and at the present time the theory of evolution is leaving a deep impress on literature.

Whence came this magnificent universe? What is the origin and destiny of man? Is the general drift of human affairs upward or downward? These are great fundamental questions, and the answers we give them lie at the bottom of our thinking and give tone to our writing. The world is not the same to the Christian theist and to the agnostic. Human life has a deeper significance to the man who believes in the loving providence of God than to the man who believes only in the existence of matter and natural law. The man who believes in the presence and sovereignty of God in all things looks hopefully to the future. He is optimistic rather than pessimistic. The presence of an exuberant vitality reveals itself in a cheerful, buoyant tone. Scott's exuberant spirit forms a pleasing contrast with Carlyle's dyspeptic cynicism.

It is often highly important to understand the fundamental beliefs of a writer. His works may be in a measure unintelligible till his standpoint is fully understood. Sometimes his various writings are



only an expansion and application of one or two great fundamental principles. The works of Herbert Spencer, for example, are in the main an elaboration of the theory of evolution. Byron represented a skeptical reaction against the conventional manners and beliefs of his day. The essential feature of Emerson's work is found in a single sentence in "Nature. " "We learn, " he says, "that the Highest is present to the soul of man, that the dread universal Essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; that spirit is one, and not compound; that spirit does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves. "

22. *Literary School.* In like manner it is interesting and sometimes illuminating to know the literary school or tendency to which a writer belongs. Every author has his limitations and idiosyncrasies. First of all, he may be a writer of prose alone or of poetry alone. In prose he may confine himself to a single department, as fiction or history; or in poetry he may be chiefly lyric, didactic, or dramatic. Within these narrower spheres he may identify himself with a single tendency or group of writers. In history he may be philosophic or narrative; in fiction he may be a romanticist or a realist; in poetry he may be subjective or objective in his treatment of themes. Scott's romanticism, for instance, which delights in mediæval scenes and incidents, is very unlike Dickens's realism, which depicts the scenes and incidents of actual contemporary life. George Eliot's psychologic novels are different from those of either Scott or Dickens. Bryant's clear descriptions of nature stand in striking contrast with Poe's mystical melodies.

23. *Mood and Purpose.* It is important to understand the mood and purpose of an author. We are not in a position fairly to judge a work until we know its spirit and object. Until we know whether the writer is playful or earnest, joyous or sad, satirical or serious, we cannot give his words the right tone and value; and until we see clearly what he is driving at, we cannot properly estimate the successive steps in his production nor judge of its worth as a whole.

The moods expressed in literature are exceedingly various. Since literature is the expression of the intellectual life of man, it embodies the various moods and passions to which human nature is subject. Sometimes, for example, there is laughing humor, as in Holmes's

"The Deacon's Masterpiece. " Sometimes there is violent anger, as in Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers. " We feel his unrestrained wrath, as he exclaims, —

"Prepare for rhyme—I'll publish right or wrong;  
Fools are my theme, let satire be my song."

Sometimes the mood is one of pensive meditation, as when Gray sits alone in the country churchyard amid deepening twilight:

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me."

Sometimes it is a righteous indignation that blazes and burns, as when Carlyle exclaims, in the presence of selfishness and wrong: "Foolish men imagine that because judgment for an evil thing is delayed, there is no justice but an accidental one, here below. Judgment for an evil thing is many times delayed some day or two, some century or two, but it is sure as life, it is as sure as death! In the center of the world-whirlwind, verily now as in the oldest days, dwells and speaks a God. The great soul of the world is *just*. "

Often the mood or spirit of gifted writers is something too intangible to be firmly grasped, yet its presence is felt as a pervasive and delightful atmosphere. A work is sometimes suffused with the divine touch of genius, as the delicate and indescribable hues of autumn glorify the valleys and mountains. While hovering near the earth for a time, the spirit of genius, as in Shakespeare and Ruskin, sometimes suddenly and spontaneously soars to regions of supernal splendor, —altitudes of beauty absolutely inaccessible to ordinary and unaided mortals.

The purpose of a literary work, like its mood or spirit, may be various. In a measure it varies with the department of literature to which the work belongs. The purpose of history, which brings before us the achievements of the past, is chiefly instruction. The oratory of the pulpit and the forum aims at persuasion. Fiction aims primarily at entertainment, though it may also be made the vehicle for religious, sociological, or moral teachings. Poetry aims at pleasure by means of melody, felicity of expression, the picturing of moods and scenes, and the narration of interesting incidents or important

events. When the purpose of a production is clearly apprehended we are prepared to judge of the wisdom of the author in his choice and adaptation of means.

24. *Study of an Author's Life.* The foregoing considerations show us the value of an acquaintance with an author's life. Without this acquaintance we are not prepared, in many cases, to understand or judge his productions. A good biography will acquaint us with the circumstances in which his talents were developed, and disclose to us the autobiographic materials which have been embodied in his works. It will reveal to us his views of life and his principles of art. It will show us, in short, the man behind the work, and thus help us to grasp the full significance of his utterance.

No one is absolutely independent of his surroundings. Men are frequently led, and sometimes driven by them, into the lines of work which they pursue. Hawthorne's stories, for the most part, grew out of his New England life. Had he been brought up south of the Potomac, they would have been different. Had Irving never gone to England, he would not have written "Bracebridge Hall"; and had he not sojourned in Spain, he would not have written "Alhambra" and the "Life of Columbus." Byron's "Childe Harold" is but a poetic record of his travels. Thus it is seen that an author's work, in large measure, grows out of his surroundings and experience, and cannot be thoroughly understood without an acquaintance with his life. It sometimes happens, as Shelley has sung in his interesting "Julian and Maddalo," that

"Most wretched men  
Are cradled into poetry by wrong;  
They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

16. How is a book related to its author? What does it exhibit? What is said of the *artistic sense*? 17. How is intellectual force revealed? How does a sensitive nature show itself? Illustrate. 18. In what does the moral nature appear? What gives fundamental tone to literature? Illustrate. 19. What must be back of the best writing? What was Milton's opinion of the poet? What is said of the world's great classics? 20. Whence does our knowledge come? What gives power and vitality to a piece of literature? What is meant by *autobiographic elements*? Illustrate from Goldsmith and Dickens. 21. What is said of a



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

writer's fundamental views? Whence do they come? Illustrate. What questions lie at the basis of our thinking? Illustrate. What has physical vitality to do with literature? What thought dominates Spencer's works? What is the dominant belief of Emerson? 22. Mention some of a writer's limitations. Explain the difference between Scott and Dickens; between Bryant and Poe. 23. Why is it important to know the mood and purpose of an author? Why are the moods different? Give examples of different moods. Explain the general purpose of *history*, *oratory*, *fiction*, and *poetry*. Why should we know the purpose of an author? 24. Why study the biography of an author? What will it reveal to us? What have surroundings to do with an author? Give illustrations. What is the quotation from Shelley?

### ILLUSTRATIVE AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES

The following selections should be studied with reference to such questions as these:

What light does the selection throw on the author? Is he a man of large attainments? Does it show refinement of thought and feeling? Does it display literary art? Has it virile force? Does it show a true sense of right? Is there a large, noble nature back of it? Does it grow out of the author's personal experience? Has it the force of conviction? How does the author conceive of the world? What does he think of God? How does he regard human life? Is he hopeful or pessimistic? Is he a writer of prose, poetry, or both? To what school of writing does he belong? What is the mood or spirit, —humorous, buoyant, serious, sad, ironical, angry, genial, urbane? What is its purpose, —to instruct, please, persuade?

The love of dirt is among the earliest of passions, as it is the latest. Mud-pies gratify one of our first and best instincts. So long as we are dirty, we are pure. Fondness for the ground comes back to a man after he has seen the round of pleasure and business, eaten dirt, and sown wild-oats, drifted about the world, and taken the wind of all its moods. The love of digging in the ground (or of looking on while he pays another to dig) is as sure to come back to him as he is sure, at last, to go under the ground and stay there. —CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

The end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love

him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection.

MILTON.

We are like lambs in a field, disporting themselves under the eye of the butcher, who chooses out first one and then another for his prey. So it is that in our good days we are all unconscious of the evil Fate may have presently in store for us—sickness, poverty, mutilation, loss of sight or reason. —SCHOPENHAUER.

Alas! 'tis true I have gone here and there,  
And made myself a motley to the view;  
Gor'd mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,  
Made old offences of affections new;  
Most times it is that I have looked on truth  
Askance and strangely. —SHAKESPEARE.

In order to secure my credit and character as a tradesman, I took care not only to be in *reality* industrious and frugal, but to avoid the appearances to the contrary. I dressed plain, and was seen at no places of idle diversion. I never went out a fishing or shooting; a book, indeed, sometimes debauched me from my work, but that was seldom, was private, and gave no scandal; and to show that I was not above my business, I sometimes brought home the paper I purchased at the stores through the streets on a wheelbarrow. —FRANKLIN.

Given, a man with moderate intellect, a moral standard not higher than the average, some rhetorical affluence and great glibness of speech, what is the career in which, without the aid of birth or money, he may most easily attain power and reputation in English society? Where is the Goshen of mediocrity in which a smattering of science and learning will pass for profound instruction, where platitudes will be accepted as wisdom, bigoted narrowness as holy zeal, unctuous egoism as God-given piety? Let such a man become an evangelical preacher; he will then find it possible to reconcile small ability with great ambition, superficial knowledge with the prestige of erudition, a middling morale with a high reputation for sanctity. —GEORGE ELIOT.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record  
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word;

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne, —  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.

LOWELL.

Thus I live in the world rather as a spectator of mankind than as one of the species, by which means I have made myself a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant, and artisan, without ever meddling with any practical part in life. I am very well versed in the theory of a husband or a father, and can discern the errors in the economy, business, and diversions of others better than those who are engaged in them; as standers-by discover blots, which are apt to escape those who are in the game. I never espoused any party with violence, and am resolved to observe an exact neutrality between the Whigs and Tories, unless I shall be forced to declare myself by the hostilities of either side.

ADDISON.

Out—out are the lights—out all!  
And over each quivering form,  
The curtain, a funeral pall,  
Comes down with the rush of a storm;  
And the angels, all pallid and wan,  
Uprising, unveiling, affirm  
That the play is the tragedy “Man,”  
And its hero the Conqueror Worm. —POE.

The essays professedly serious, if I have been able to execute my own intentions, will be found exactly conformable to the precepts of Christianity, without any accommodation to the licentiousness and levity of the present age. I therefore look back on this part of my work with pleasure, which no praise or blame of man can diminish or augment. I shall never envy the honors which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given ardor to virtue and confidence to truth. —SAMUEL JOHNSON.

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,  
Wear hodden gray, and a' that;  
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine—  
A man's a man for a' that.  
For a' that, and a' that,  
Their tinsel show, and a' that;



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

The honest man, though e'er sae poor,  
Is king of men for a' that. —BURNS.

I said to myself that my hero should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs; that he should never get a shilling he had not earned; that no sudden turn should lift him in a moment to wealth and high station; that whatever small competency he might gain, should be won by the sweat of his brow; that before he could find so much as an arbor to sit down in, he should master, at least, half the ascent of the "Hill of Difficulty"; that he should not even marry a beautiful girl or a lady of rank. As Adam's son he should share Adam's doom, and drain, throughout life, a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment. —CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

Day set on Norham's castled steep,  
And Tweed's fair river, broad and deep,  
And Cheviot's mountains lone:  
The battled towers, the donjon keep,  
The loophole grates, where captives weep,  
The flanking walls that round it sweep,  
In yellow lustre shone.  
The warriors on the turrets high,  
Moving athwart the evening sky,  
Seemed forms of giant height;  
Their armor, as it caught the rays,  
Flashed back again the western blaze,  
In lines of dazzling light. —SCOTT.

It is a restful chapter in any book of Cooper's when somebody doesn't step on a dry twig and alarm all the reds and whites for two hundred yards around. Every time a Cooper person is in peril, and absolute silence is worth four dollars a minute, he is sure to step on a dry twig. There may be a hundred handier things to step on, but that wouldn't satisfy Cooper. Cooper requires him to turn out and find a dry twig; and if he can't do it, go and borrow one. In fact the Leather Stocking Series ought to have been called the Broken Twig Series.

MARK TWAIN.

Live and love,  
Doing both nobly, because lowly;  
Live and work, strongly, because patiently!  
And, for the deed of Death, trust to God  
That it be well done, unrepented of,

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

And not to loss. And thence with constant prayers  
Fasten your souls so high, that constantly  
The smile of your heroic cheer may float  
Above all floods of earthly agonies,  
Purification being the joy of pain. — MRS. BROWNING.

### NOTE

The autobiographic elements in Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" and "Vicar of Wakefield," in Charlotte Brontë's "Shirley" and "Villette," in Dickens's "David Copperfield" and George Eliot's "Mill on the Floss," will be found interesting and helpful studies. In each case a good biography of the author will give the necessary information to the student.

CHAPTER III

SOME ÆSTHETIC PRINCIPLES

25. *Æsthetics*. The science of beauty in general is called Æsthetics, to which we have to look for some of the principles that are to guide our critical judgment. Unfortunately for us, the science of beauty has not yet been fully and satisfactorily wrought out, and the ablest writers, from Aristotle to Herbert Spencer, exhibit great diversity of view. There are two main theories of beauty: the one makes beauty subjective, or an emotion of the mind; the other makes it objective, or a quality in the external object. Without entering into the intricacies and difficulties of the discussion, beauty will here be regarded as that quality in literature which awakens in the cultivated reader a sense of the beautiful. This sense of the beautiful is a refined and pleasurable feeling; and, as we shall see, it is traceable to a variety of sources.

26. *Literary Taste*. Literary taste is that power or faculty of the mind which apprehends and appreciates what is beautiful and artistic in literature. It embraces two elements: first, the apprehension of the æsthetic quality; and secondly, an appreciation or emotional response to its appeal. These two elements are not always equally developed in the critic; and it frequently happens that an artistic literary production affords exquisite pleasure without a clear apprehension of the æsthetic elements from which the pleasure springs.

In literary criticism, as has already been shown, the standard of taste is the ideal, developed by an application of necessary and recognized principles, which the intelligent critic is able to form in every department of literature. The capacity of taste is a natural gift; but, like other powers of the mind, it is capable of great development. It is cultivated by a study of the principles of beauty and by a contemplation of beautiful objects in nature and art. Bad taste exhibits itself in a failure to apprehend and appreciate what is genuinely beautiful; it often mistakes defects for excellences. A refined taste responds to what is delicate in beauty, and a catholic taste recognizes and responds to beauty of every kind. The critic who would do honor to his office must have a taste both refined and catholic.

27. *Æsthetic Elements.* Literary beauty may pertain either to the *form* or to the *content*. Deferring to subsequent chapters the elements of *external beauty*, we here consider the elements of *internal beauty*. Though beauty of form and beauty of content may thus be distinguished, they are always combined in works of the highest excellence. Both alike have their source in the cultivated, creative spirit of the writer. They cannot be effectually learned by rule; and the best training for successful authorship is the development of the intellectual and moral faculties.

Vividness of description is a frequent source of literary beauty. Scenes, objects, and events are sometimes so presented as to become visible to the inner eye. Thus Tennyson describes the flinging of Arthur's sword:

"The great brand  
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon."

Carlyle was a master of graphic description, and in a few touches he thus brings De Quincey before us: "One of the smallest man figures I ever saw; shaped like a pair of tongs, and hardly above five feet in all. When he sate, you would have taken him by candlelight for the beautifullest little child; blue-eyed, sparkling face, had there not been something, too, which said, 'Eccovi—this child has been in hell!'"

Meditative reflection, when aptly associated with circumstance or occasion, may become a pleasing source of beauty. When employed by way of introduction, it may, as frequently in Irving and Hawthorne, strike the keynote of what follows. Sometimes it gives natural expression to the vague thought or feeling that had been produced in the reader by the preceding narrative and that would otherwise have remained unsatisfied. In the darkness and silence of night the poet hears the striking of a deep-toned bell. Naturally he thinks of the flight of time.

"The bell strikes one. We take no note of time  
But from its loss: to give it then a tongue  
Is wise in man. As if an angel spoke,  
I feel the solemn sound. If heard aright,  
It is the knell of my departed hours."

A meditation may, as a conclusion, impart a satisfying completeness to a piece. Nothing could be finer, for example, than Addison's



reflections at the close of his essay on the tombs of Westminster Abbey: "When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of parents upon a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tomb of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow. When I see kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together."

Harmony of thought and expression is another source of excellence. The thought should be clothed in a perfect body, so that nothing can be added or subtracted without marring the beauty. The following stanza from Holmes's "The Last Leaf" will serve for illustration:

"The mossy marbles rest  
On the lips that he has prest  
In their bloom;  
And the names he loved to hear  
Have been carved for many a year  
On the tomb."

When, in addition to perfect harmony between spirit and form, the sound reinforces the sense, there is an added element of beauty. The intellect is thus assisted in imaging or realizing the scene. As the heroine returns to her palace in Tennyson's "Godiva," —

"All at once  
With twelve great shocks of sound, the shameless noon  
Was clashed and hammered from a hundred towers."

A well-known illustration is furnished in Pope's "Essay on Criticism":

"Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,  
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;  
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,  
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar."

The felicitous expression of some well-known truth or experience is always pleasing. In its happiest form such an expression is received as the final embodiment of its truth. It is henceforth taken up by the multitude and quoted as having the authority of a sacred text. Pope tells us, for example, that

“To err is human; to forgive, divine”;

and also that

“Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

But no other English writer has equaled Shakespeare in the number of felicitous expressions that have passed into current use. His works are a veritable mine of jeweled phrases. We often feel, for example, that somehow there is a mysterious power controlling our lives; and this experience he voices in the well-known lines, —

“There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.”

Yet at the same time, recognizing the truth of human freedom, he declares, —

“Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,  
Which we ascribe to heaven; the fated sky  
Gives us free scope, only doth backward push  
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.”

High spiritual truth, in fitting expression, is a source of great beauty. There are three great provinces of thought, —man, nature, and God. The last is the greatest of all; and the highest achievement of literature is to lead us to a new or fuller appreciation of his character. As we look upon the irrepressible and unending conflict between good and evil in this world, we are sometimes tempted to doubt a favorable issue; but Lowell tells us, in self-evidencing words, that

“Behind the dim unknown  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.”

To Ruskin the various phenomena of nature brought a sweet message: “All those passings to and fro of fruitful shower and grateful shade, and all those visions of silver palaces built about the

horizon, and voices of moaning winds and threatening thunders, and glories of colored robe and cloven ray, are but to deepen in our hearts the acceptance, and distinctness, and dearness of the simple words, 'Our Father, which art in heaven.' "

Another principal source of literary beauty is found in a worthy expression of noble thought and sentiment. This may be regarded as the soul of enduring literature, and it is as exhaustless as the human mind itself. The dauntless love of liberty that breathes through Patrick Henry's famous speech is thrilling in its eloquence: "What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but, as for me, give me liberty, or give me death! "

Carlyle conceived of nature as the vesture of God; and, as he speaks of the universe, this thought lifts his style to great majesty: "Oh, could I transport thee direct from the beginnings to the endings, how were thy eyesight unsealed, and thy heart set flaming in the Light-sea of celestial wonder! Then sawest thou that this fair Universe, were it in the meanest province thereof, is in very deed the star-domed City of God; that through every star, through every grass-blade, and most, through every Living Soul, the glory of a present God still beams. But Nature, which is the Time-vesture of God, and reveals Him to the wise, hides Him from the foolish. "

Love is a perennial inspiration both in prose and poetry. It partakes of the divine, for "God is love. " Its highest manifestations, whether in the family, among relatives and friends, or between lovers, are always beautiful; and perhaps Browning was not far wrong when he sang, —

"There is no good in life but love—but love!  
What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;  
Love yields it, gives it worth."

The portrayal of noble character is always inspiring. It appeals to the better side of our nature, and strengthens our confidence in humanity. No literary art can confer immortality on what is ignoble. The fiction that is devoted to obscene realism, whatever may be the prestige of its authors or its current vogue, is surely doomed. Only that which is morally good is destined to live through the ages. The genial Dickens will always be more popular than the satirical

Thackeray. Boswell's "Life of Johnson" owes its principal charm not to any trick of style, but to the honest, rugged piece of manhood it brings before us. Only a man of Luther's heroic spirit could have inspired this magnificent tribute in Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero-Worship": "I will call this Luther a true great man; great in intellect, in courage, affection, and integrity; one of our most lovable and precious men. Great, not as a hewn obelisk, but as an Alpine mountain, —so simple, honest, spontaneous, not setting up to be great at all; there for quite another purpose than being great! Ah yes, unsubduable granite, piercing far and wide into the heavens; yet in the clefts of it fountains, green, beautiful valleys with flowers! A right spiritual hero and prophet; once more, a true son of nature and fact, for whom these centuries, and many that are to come yet, will be thankful to Heaven. "

Heroic self-sacrifice strongly appeals to us. Whenever a man or woman gives up self for the good of others, we intuitively admire and honor the deed. The story of Thermopylæ, the leap of Curtius into the yawning chasm, the charge of the Light Brigade, —

"... though the soldier knew  
Some one had blundered," —

are instances of heroic self-sacrifice which the world is unwilling to forget. There is a charm in Tennyson's "Godiva" or his "Enoch Arden" beyond the reach of mere art; it is found in the noble spirit of the heroine who replies to the taunt of her husband, —

"But I would die";

and in the deep self-renunciation of the hero who, in heartbreaking anguish, prayed, —

"Help me not to break in upon her peace. "

The beauty of a life of simplicity and benevolence is seen in the immortal Vicar of Wakefield. His unaffected goodness has made him dear to successive generations. In like manner we pay a spontaneous tribute to Chaucer's "poure parson of a toune, " and to the preacher of the "Deserted Village":

"A man he was to all the country dear,  
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;



Remote from towns he ran his godly race,  
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change, his place.  
Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,  
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;  
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,  
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise."

The fitting description of scenes and incidents of grandeur imparts dignity and charm to a production. Grandeur is of two kinds: first, the grandeur or sublimity of natural objects, such as the ocean, a storm, an earthquake, or other exhibitions of tremendous power; and secondly, the moral sublime, in which the heroic soul rises superior to dangers and death. Milton's "Paradise Lost" abounds in grave and sublime passages. Byron reaches the sublime in many of the descriptions of "Childe Harold," of which the following will serve for illustration:

"Far along

From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,  
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,  
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,  
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,  
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud."

Perhaps no finer instance of the moral sublime is to be found than in the bearing of Luther before the Imperial Diet in the city of Worms. He was confronted by the chief dignitaries of Church and Empire. The emperor himself, Charles V, was present. "Will you, or will you not, retract?" solemnly demanded the speaker of the Diet. "Unless," replied the intrepid reformer, "unless I am convinced by the testimony of Holy Scripture or by clear and indisputable reasoning, I cannot, and will not, retract anything; for it is unsafe for a Christian to do anything against his conscience. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me. Amen!"

Another source of beauty is found in tenderness and pathos. These feelings appeal to the gentler side of our nature. The pathos may arise from various causes, —from bereaved affection, from fond memories, from sore disappointments, or from helpless suffering. Every one is familiar with Dickens's description of the death of little Nell in "Old Curiosity Shop." Irving's story of "The Broken Heart" is deeply pathetic. The deathbed scene of Colonel Newcome in Thackeray's great novel is notable for its simple pathos: "At the

usual evening hour the chapel bell began to toll, and Thomas Newcome's hands outside the bed feebly beat time. And just as the last bell struck, a peculiar sweet smile shone over his face, and he lifted up his head a little, and quickly said 'Adsum!' and fell back. It was the word used at school, when names were called; and lo, he, whose heart was that of a little child, had answered to his name, and stood in the presence of his Master. "

There is a tender regret in Hood's little poem, "I Remember":

"I remember, I remember,  
The fir-trees dark and high;  
I used to think their slender tops  
Were close against the sky;  
It was a childish ignorance,  
But now 'tis little joy  
To know I'm further off from heaven  
Than when I was a boy."

The ludicrous often adds charm to literature. It is divided into two species, — wit and humor. Wit consists in the discovery of remote analogies or relations, and produces an amusing surprise. It has various forms. In the *pun*, which is a rather low order of wit, there is a play on the meaning of words. Punning is an art easily acquired; but a pun is usually an impertinence to be excused only by its felicity. Hood was one of the most ingenious of punsters; and in his ballad, "Faithless Nelly Gray, " the wit of each stanza is found in a pun.

"Ben Battle was a soldier bold,  
And used to war's alarms;  
But a cannon-ball took off his legs,  
So he laid down his arms."

*Satire* ridicules the follies and vices of men, and is frequent in both ancient and modern literature. Sometimes it is good-natured, but oftener it is bitter. Swift's "Tale of a Tub" is a fierce attack upon ecclesiastical divisions, while Pope's "Dunciad, " which impales many of his contemporary writers, almost ruined the reputations it touched. Addison in the *Spectator* is genial in his satire. Byron is a master of powerful satire, and in the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" he indiscriminately lampoons his contemporaries. For example:

"Shall gentle Coleridge pass unnoticed here,  
To turgid ode and tumid stanza dear?  
Though themes of innocence amuse him best,  
Yet still obscurity's a welcome guest.  
If inspiration should her aid refuse  
To him who takes a Pixy for a muse,  
Yet none in lofty numbers can surpass  
The bard who soars to elegize an ass.  
How well the subject suits his noble mind!  
'A fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind!'"

A *parody* is a burlesque imitation and degradation of something serious. In his song, "Those Evening Bells," Moore wrote in pensive mood, —

"And so 'twill be when I am gone;  
That tuneful peal will still ring on,  
While other bards shall walk these dells,  
And sing your praise, sweet evening bells."

But in Hood's parody of the same title, this stanza is travestied as follows:

"And so 'twill be when she is gone;  
That tuneful peal will still ring on,  
And other maids with timely yells  
Forget to stay those evening bells."

The other principal form of the ludicrous is humor. It is wit modified by a genial or sympathetic feeling. It has its origin in the disposition or character, while wit springs alone from the intellect. It often pervades an entire production. While wit generally breaks out in brief and sudden flashes, humor is frequently diffused through an entire work like a delicious fragrance. Addison's Sir Roger de Coverley papers in the *Spectator* are delightful examples of delicate humor. Hood's "Up the Rhine" is a rich commingling of wit and humor. Dickens's "Pickwick Papers" and Mark Twain's "Innocents Abroad" are humorous works of a broader type. Irving's minor writings are suffused with a delightful humor. And no one who has read the humorous beginning of the "Vicar of Wakefield" is likely to forget it: "I was ever of opinion, that the honest man who married and brought up a large family, did more service than he who continued single and only talked of a population. From this motive, I

had scarcely taken orders a year, before I began to think seriously of matrimony, and chose my wife, as she did her wedding-gown, not for a fine glossy surface, but for such qualities as would wear well. "

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

25. What is meant by *æsthetics*? What are the two theories of beauty? How is beauty considered in this book? 26. What is meant by *taste*? What are its two elements? What is said of their development? How may taste be cultivated? How is bad taste exhibited? What is the distinction between a *refined* and a *catholic* taste? 27. To what may literary beauty pertain? What elements are considered in this chapter? Where do we find beauty of *form* and of *content* united? Why is vivid description an element of beauty? Give an illustration. How may meditative reflection become an element of beauty? Illustrate. What is meant by harmony of thought and expression? Give an example. How may sound reënforce the sense? Illustrate. What is said about felicitous expression? What writers excel in felicity of expression? Illustrate. What is said of high spiritual truth? Name the three great provinces of thought. What does Lowell think of the evils in the world? What does Ruskin say of the phenomena of nature? What is said of noble thought and sentiment? What makes Patrick Henry's speech thrilling? How did Carlyle conceive of nature? What is said of love in literature? What is Browning's idea? What is the effect of portraying noble character? What is said of obscene realism? To what does Boswell's "Life of Johnson" owe its principal charm? What does Carlyle say of Luther? What is said of heroic self-sacrifice? Illustrate. Where do we see the beauty of simple goodness portrayed? What is the effect of the fitting portrayal of grandeur? What two kinds of grandeur are distinguished? Mention some objects of natural grandeur. Illustrate from Byron. Give an illustration of the moral sublime. To what does pathos appeal? Illustrate. Repeat the quotation from Hood. What two species of the *ludicrous* are distinguished? What is *wit*? What is a *pun*? Illustrate. What is *satire*? What are the two kinds of satire? Give an illustration. What is a *parody*? Illustrate. How does *humor* differ from *wit*? Give an example of humor.

### ILLUSTRATIVE AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES

The following extracts should be carefully studied for the purpose of determining their elements of *internal excellence or beauty*. They should be tested by such questions as these:



Is the extract descriptive or meditative? What gives vividness to the description? What points are brought out in the meditation? What is the main thought or feeling presented? Does it pertain to man, nature, or God? What phases of nature are considered? What element of character is set forth? Is there dignity or felicity of expression? Is grandeur portrayed? Is it physical or moral? Is there tenderness or pathos? What gives it this element? Is there art or humor? What kind of wit? What is the chief source of beauty?

A man from Maine, who had never paid more than twenty-five cents for admission to an entertainment, went to a New York theatre where the play was "The Forty Thieves," and was charged a dollar and a half for a ticket. Handing the pasteboard back, he remarked, "Keep it, Mister; I don't want to see the other thirty-nine." —ANON.

### OLD IRONSIDES

O better that her shattered hulk  
Should sink beneath the wave;  
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,  
And there should be her grave;  
Nail to the mast her holy flag,  
Set every threadbare sail,  
And give her to the god of storms,  
The lightning and the gale.—HOLMES.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. —PAUL.

Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcerned  
The cheerful haunts of man, to wield the axe  
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,  
From morn to eve his solitary task.  
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears  
And tail cropped short, half lurcher and half cur,  
His dog attends him! Close behind his heel  
Now creeps he slow; and now, with many a frisk  
Wide-scampering, snatches up the drifted snow

With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout;  
Then shakes his powdered coat, and barks for joy.  
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl  
Moves right toward the mark; nor stops for aught,  
But now and then with pressure of his thumb,  
To adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube,  
That fumes beneath his nose; the trailing cloud  
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air.—COWPER.

Oh, the grave! the grave! It buries every error, covers every defect, extinguishes every resentment. From its peaceful bosom spring none but fond regrets and tender recollections. Who can look down upon the grave even of an enemy, and not feel a compunctious throb that he should ever have warred with the poor handful of earth that lies moldering before him? But the grave of those we loved, —what a place for meditation! There it is we call up, in long review, the whole history of virtue and gentleness, and the thousand endearments lavished upon us, almost unheeded, in the daily intercourse of intimacy; there it is that we dwell upon the tenderness, the solemn, awful tenderness of the parting scene. —IRVING.

#### JOAN OF ARC

The executioner had been directed to apply his torch from below. He did so. The fiery smoke rose up in billowy columns. A Dominican monk was then standing almost at her side. Wrapped up in his sublime office, he saw not the danger, but still persisted in his prayers. Even then when the last enemy was racing up the fiery stairs to seize her, even at that moment did this noblest of girls think only for *him*, the one friend that would not forsake her, and not herself; bidding him with her last breath to care for his own preservation, but to leave *her* to God. —DE QUINCEY.

O, lay thy hand in mine, dear!  
We're growing old;  
But Time hath brought no sign, dear,  
That hearts grow cold.  
'Tis long, long since our new love  
Made life divine;  
But age enricheth true love,  
Like noble wine.—MASSEY.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

The noon-day sun came slanting down the rocky slopes of La Ricca, and its masses of entangled and tall foliage, whose autumnal tints were mixed with the wet verdure of a thousand evergreens, were penetrated with it as with rain. I cannot call it color, it was conflagration. Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle, the rejoicing trees sank into the valley in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life; each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sunbeam, first a torch and then an emerald. Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas, arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the gray walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted and let them fall. —RUSKIN.

Gineral C. is a drefle smart man;  
He's ben on all sides that give places or pelf,  
But consistency still wuz a part of his plan,—  
He's been true to *one* party,—and thet is himself;  
    So John P.  
    Robinson he  
Sez he shall vote for Gineral C.

Gineral C. he goes in fer the war;  
He don't vally principle more 'n an old cud;  
Wut did God make us raytional creeturs fer,  
But glory an' gunpowder, plunder an' blood?  
    So John P.  
    Robinson he  
Sez he shall vote for Gineral C.—LOWELL.

### WOMAN

Not she with traitorous kiss her Saviour stung,  
Not she denied him with unholy tongue;  
She, while apostles shrank, could dangers brave,  
Last at the cross and earliest at the grave.—BARRETT.  
Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,  
Tears from the depths of some divine despair  
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,  
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail  
That brings our friends up from the underworld,  
Sad as the last which reddens over one  
That sinks with all we love below the verge;  
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.—TENNYSON.

No nation which did not contemplate this wonderful universe with an awe-stricken and reverential belief that there was a great unknown, omnipotent, and all-wise and all-just Being, superintending all men in it, and all interests in it—no nation ever came to very much, nor did any man either, who forgot that. If a man did forget that, he forgot the most important part of his mission in this world. —CARLYLE.

#### GOLDSMITH

Think of him reckless, thriftless, vain if you like—but merciful, gentle, generous, full of love and pity. He passes out of our life and goes to render his account beyond it. Think of the poor pensioners weeping at his grave; think of the noble spirits that admired and deplored him; think of the righteous pen that wrote his epitaph—and the wonderful and unanimous response of affection with which the world has paid the love he gave it. His humor delighting us still; his song fresh and beautiful as when he first charmed with it; his words in all our mouths; his very weaknesses beloved and familiar—his benevolent spirit seems still to smile upon us; to do gentle kindnesses; to succor with sweet charity; to caress, to soothe, and forgive; to plead with the fortunate for the unhappy and the poor—THACKERAY.

We watched her breathing through the night,  
Her breathing soft and low,  
As in her breast the wave of life  
Kept heaving to and fro.

Our very hopes belied our fears,  
Our fears our hopes belied,—  
We thought her dying when she slept,  
And sleeping when she died.

For when the morn came, dim and sad,  
And chill with early showers,



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Her quiet eyelids closed,—she had  
Another morn than ours.—HOOD.

### NOTE

In addition to the foregoing extracts, those appended to the previous chapters may be examined again with the special view of discovering their æsthetic elements. Furthermore, the student may be required to study complete works—such as Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night," Tennyson's "Enoch Arden," Scott's "Ivanhoe," Dickens's "David Copperfield," and others that will occur to the teacher—in order to discover the beauties of description, meditation, thought, sentiment, character, and other æsthetic elements awakening pleasure and imparting excellence. The results may be presented either orally or in writing.

PART SECOND

RHETORICAL ELEMENTS

CHAPTER IV

WORDS, SENTENCES, PARAGRAPHS

28. *English Composite.* The English language is composite, its words being drawn from various sources. The original and principal element is Anglo-Saxon, which prevailed in England for about five hundred years. By the conquest of William of Normandy, French was introduced into England, and was spoken by the ruling classes for about three hundred years. The amalgamation of the Anglo-Saxon and the Norman French—a process that was fairly completed in the fourteenth century—resulted in modern English. But numerous words came in from other sources. The early introduction of Roman Christianity into England, and the revival of learning at the close of the Middle Ages, introduced a large Latin element. The Celtic population of the British Isles contributed a few words, such as *pibroch*, *clan*, *bard*. A considerable Greek element has been introduced by theology and science, and English conquests and commerce have introduced words from almost every portion of the globe, of which *pagoda*, *bazaar*, *veda*, *bamboo*, *taboo*, and *raccoon* will serve as examples.

The composite character of our language has made it very copious and very interesting. No other language has so many words, our largest dictionaries defining more than a hundred thousand. Every word has its history, and often a very interesting one. *Raccoon*, for instance, takes us back to the adventures of the redoubtable John Smith in Virginia. The word *bishop* carries us back to the introduction of Christianity among the Anglo-Saxons at the close of the sixth century, and then through the Latin to the primitive days of the Church, when an *episkopos*, or overseer, presided over the newly founded congregations in the leading cities of Greece. *Taboo* reminds us of English explorations and conquests in the islands of the Pacific. Thus nearly every word may be traced to its source and, rightly understood, is freighted with tales of conquest, battle, exploration, commerce, science, and invention. It carries with it its meaning and atmosphere of association, which the intelligent and skillful writer knows how to use to advantage.

29. *Anglo-Saxon and Latin Elements.* The Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic element of our language embraces about sixty per cent of the words in common use. It may be regarded as the trunk, on which the other elements have been grafted as branches. The Latin element embraces about thirty per cent of an ordinary vocabulary, nearly two thirds of which, or about twenty per cent, comes through the French. The question has been raised as to which element is preferable. Should a writer's style be Saxonized or Latinized?

No absolute rule can be laid down. The two elements supplement each other. In general the Anglo-Saxon element comprises concrete terms, and the Latin element abstract terms. As Trench has pointed out, "The great features of nature, sun, moon, and stars, earth, water, and fire; the divisions of time; three out of the four seasons, spring, summer, and winter; the features of natural scenery, the words used in earliest childhood, the simpler emotions of the mind; all the prime social relations, father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, brother, sister, —these are of native growth and unborrowed." [57:1]

It is thus seen that the Anglo-Saxon element is full of force in its presentation of definite concrete objects; and it is a noteworthy fact that our best writers use a large proportion of native words. In ordinary discourse none of our best writers, perhaps, fall below seventy per cent of Anglo-Saxon. But in philosophy, which deals largely with abstract ideas, the Anglo-Saxon element, as in passages from Herbert Spencer, may fall as low as sixty per cent. It is interesting to estimate the percentage of Anglo-Saxon or Latin in an author. This may easily be done by counting the number of words in a given passage for the denominator, and the number of Anglo-Saxon or Latin words for the numerator of a common fraction, which may then be reduced to a decimal.

30. *What Element to Choose.* A writer's style should be determined by higher considerations than the deliberate purpose to use as far as possible any single element of our language. Such a purpose degenerates into affectation, and becomes a mannerism. The following extract from a sonnet by Addison Alexander shows what may be done by short Anglo-Saxon words; but, because of its lack of musical rhythm and fine poetic quality, it is not to be commended as a model:

"Think not that strength lies in the big round word,  
Or that the brief and plain must needs be weak.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

To whom can this be true who once has heard  
The cry for help, the tongue that all men speak  
When want, or woe, or fear, is in the throat,  
So that each word gasped out is like a shriek  
Pressed from the sore heart, or a strange wild note  
Sung by some fay or fiend."

With this may be compared the following lines from a sonnet by Longfellow, in which the musical effect of the Latin element will be clearly recognized:

"I saw the long line of the *vacant* shore,  
And the sea-weed and the shells upon the sand,  
And the brown rocks left bare on every hand,  
As if the ebbing tide would flow no more.  
Then heard I, more *distinctly* than before,  
The ocean breathe and its great breast *expand*,  
And hurrying came on the *defenceless* land  
The *insurgent* waters with *tumultuous* roar."

The use of Latin words often gives clearness and melody to style; and instead of a violent effort to Saxonize his writing, an author should clothe his thoughts in the diction that is most fitting and expressive.

31. *Diction*. Aristotle truly said that "the beginning of style is correctness of diction. " By diction is meant the choice and use of words. Good diction lies at the basis of good writing. Words are used to express ideas; and in view of this fundamental principle, it follows that they should be intelligible and correct. They should belong to our language; and hence the use of foreign words and phrases, except to supply a real want in English, is generally in bad taste. The use of provincial expressions, such as *tote* for *carry*, is to be avoided, except in the portrayal of provincial character. Archaic words, as well as those that have not yet established themselves, should not be employed. For these two classes of words Pope has laid down an excellent rule in his "Essay on Criticism":

"In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold,  
Alike fantastic, if too new or old;  
Be not the first by whom the new are tried,  
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

There is sometimes an obvious effort among young or half-cultured writers to seek after unusual words.

Unless the purpose of discourse is to be defeated, it is evident that the words used by a writer should have their accepted and exact meaning. The study of etymology, though sometimes misleading, is very helpful in learning the exact force of words. There are very few words in our language that are exactly synonymous; and while synonyms are often loosely used, the skillful writer is careful to distinguish their different shades of meaning. This nice use of words, impossible to the uncultivated mind, adds an exquisite charm to writing.

A very common fault of diction results in what is called "fine writing." This fault consists in the choice of high-sounding words to express commonplace ideas. It is the besetting vice of half-educated writers. In the hands of such persons a "fair lady" becomes a "female possessing considerable personal attractions," and "drinking liquor" turns into "ingurgitating spirituous stimulus." Except for purposes of wit or humor, this affectation is not to be tolerated.

32. *Sentences.* In reading various authors, it is readily observed that they use different kinds of sentences. Some writers use short sentences, others long and complicated sentences. In comparing recent authors with those of two or three centuries ago, it will generally be found that shorter sentences are now more frequent. This brevity and simplicity of predication has resulted in greater clearness. But the constant use of short, simple sentences produces a disagreeable monotony.

Sentences are rhetorically distinguished as *loose*, *periodic*, and *balanced*. A *loose* sentence is one in which the meaning is complete at one or more points before the end. Thus, at the beginning of "Pilgrim's Progress," we read: "As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a den, and laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept, I dreamed a dream."

A *periodic* sentence holds the meaning in suspense till the close. For example, Macaulay writes: "If any man could have succeeded in this attempt, a man of talents so rare, of judgments so prematurely ripe, of temper so calm, and of manners so plausible, might have been expected to succeed."

A *balanced* sentence consists of two parts, the one corresponding to the other. In Johnson's famous parallel we read: "The style of Dryden is capricious and varied, that of Pope is cautious and uniform; Dryden obeys the motions of his own mind, Pope constrains his mind to his own rules of composition. Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid; Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle."

A good style is apt to make use of all three kinds of sentences, which give an agreeable diversity to composition. The exclusive use of any one form produces monotony. In studying a writer's style, it is important to determine the prevailing type, as well as the average length, of his sentences. This investigation will give us some insight into a source of his weakness or power, and furnish a basis of interesting comparison with others.

Every sentence should have *clearness, unity, harmony, and strength*. Of these four qualities, *clearness* is the most important; for without it the purpose of discourse is defeated. Apart from the right choice and position of words, clearness is secured by *unity* of thought. This requires that the main subject retain a dominant place throughout the sentence. The writer should not allow himself to be switched off from the main proposition. *Harmony* is attained by the choice of euphonious words, and by their arrangement in an agreeable or rhythmical order. *Strength* is secured, in large measure, by the omission of unnecessary words. The error of repeating the same thought in different words is called *tautology*, while the use of more words than are necessary is known as *pleonasm* or *redundancy*. The fault of redundancy is most likely to be found in the use of adjectives; and a chaste or classic style appears particularly in a severe self-restraint in the use of qualifying expressions.

33. *Paragraph*. A paragraph consists of a group of sentences related in thought. It contains the discussion of a single phase of the subject. The nature of the paragraph determines its laws. The paragraph, like each sentence, should be characterized by unity. The opening sentence should contain the subject, or phase of the subject, to be discussed. The succeeding treatment should be cumulative in character, so that the reader is led on by a sense of the unfolding of the point under consideration.

There are various ways of expanding or building up the paragraph. It may be expanded by a process of definition. Frequently one

specification after another is given till all sides of the subject have been presented. Sometimes a general statement is followed by concrete and individual instances. Again, the development of the paragraph takes the form of proof or illustration. But whatever may be the form of development, it should grow in importance till the conclusion.

The importance of paragraphing is often lost sight of by even experienced writers. Sometimes there is an absence of clear, definite thought. Hence it happens that we frequently find whole pages without any break to indicate the transitions of thought. Such writing is apt to leave a confused or obscure impression.

### FOOTNOTES:

[57:1] Trench's "Study of Words," 155.

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

28. Why is the English language called composite? Which is the principal element? How was French introduced? What was the origin of our present English? Whence came the Latin element? Name some other elements and their sources. What is said of the copiousness of our language? of the history of words? Give illustrations. 29. What per cent in daily use is Anglo-Saxon? What per cent is Latin? What proportion of the Latin element comes through the French? Which element is preferable? What classes of words are Anglo-Saxon? What per cent of Anglo-Saxon words is used by our best writers? How do you estimate the percentage? 30. How is the purpose to use a single element of our language characterized? Contrast the sonnets of Alexander and Longfellow. What should determine the writer's choice of words? 31. What did Aristotle say of *diction*? What is meant by *diction*? What qualities should *diction* have? What is said of the use of foreign words and phrases? What is a *provincialism*? Define *archaism* and *neologism*. What is Pope's rule in regard to them? What is said of the study of etymology? of synonyms? of the nice use of words? What is meant by fine writing? Give an illustration. 32. What is the difference in the sentences of recent and older writers? What is the gain in short predication? What is the rhetorical classification of sentences? Define *loose*, *periodic*, and *balanced* sentences. Illustrate. What is said of a good style? What four characteristics should a sentence have? Which is the most important? Why? What is meant by *unity*? How is

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

*harmony* attained? How is strength or energy secured? Explain *tautology* and *redundancy*. By what is a classic style characterized? 33. What is a *paragraph*? What should be its chief characteristic? What should the opening sentence do? How is the paragraph expanded or developed? What is the effect of bad paragraphing?

### ILLUSTRATIVE AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES

The following extracts should be tested by such questions as these:

What percentage of the words is Anglo-Saxon? What percentage is Latin? From what sources are there other words? Is the diction pure, appropriate, and precise? Are there provincialisms, archaisms, neologisms? Are synonyms carefully discriminated? Is the diction high-flown? What proportion of sentences are simple? complex? compound? What proportion are *loose*? *periodic*? *balanced*? What is the average number of words? Are the sentences clear? Do they show unity of structure? Are they harmonious? Are they forcible? Can any words be omitted without loss? Is there tautology or redundancy? Are the paragraphs well built up? By what means are they developed?

Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land. In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was beyond the valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair; neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting-Castle. Here they were within sight of the City they were going to: also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof; for in this land the shining ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven. —BUNYAN.

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring. —PAUL.



Criticism, either didactic or defensive, occupies almost all his prose, except those pages which he has devoted to his patrons; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious. They have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modeled; every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little, is gay; and what is great, is splendid. He may be thought to mention himself too frequently; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Everything is excused by the play of images and the spriteliness of expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh; and though, since his earlier works, more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete. —SAMUEL JOHNSON.

The only accession which the Roman empire received, during the first century of the Christian era, was the province of Britain. In this single instance, the successors of Cæsar and Augustus were persuaded to follow the example of the former, rather than the precept of the latter. The proximity of its situation to the coast of Gaul seemed to invite their arms; the pleasing though doubtful intelligence of a pearl fishery attracted their avarice; and as Britain was viewed in the light of a distinct and insulated world, the conquest scarcely formed any exception to the general system of continental measures. After a war of about forty years, undertaken by the most stupid, maintained by the most dissolute, and terminated by the most timid of all the emperors, the far greater part of the island submitted to the Roman yoke.

GIBBON.

A mob is a society of bodies voluntarily bereaving themselves of reason, and traversing its work. The mob is man voluntarily descending to the nature of the beast. Its fit hour of activity is night. Its actions are insane, like its whole constitution. It persecutes a principle; it would whip a right; it would tar and feather justice by inflicting fire and outrage upon the houses and persons of those who have these. It resembles the prank of boys who run with fire-engines to put out the ruddy aurora streaming to the stars. The inviolate spirit turns that spite against the wrong-doers. The martyr cannot be dishonored. Every lash inflicted is a tongue of fame; every prison a more illustrious abode; every burned book or house enlightens the world; every suppressed or expunged word reverberates through

the earth from side to side. Hours of sanity and consideration are always arriving to communities, as to individuals, when the truth is seen, and the martyrs are justified. —EMERSON.

I deny not but that it is of greatest concernment, in the Church and Commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves, as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors. For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth; and, being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. —MILTON.

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion, the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half-maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and who heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle. —MACAULAY.

More manifest still are the physiological benefits of emotional pleasures. Every power, bodily and mental, is increased by "good spirits," which is our name for a general emotional satisfaction. The truth that the fundamental vital actions—those of nutrition—are furthered by laughter-moving conversation, or rather by the

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

pleasurable feeling causing laughter, is one of old standing; and every dyspeptic knows that in exhilarating company, a large and varied dinner, including not very digestible things, may be eaten with impunity, and, indeed, with benefit, while a small, carefully chosen dinner of simple things, eaten in solitude, will be followed by indigestion. —HERBERT SPENCER.

### NOTE

In addition to the foregoing extracts, some of those previously given, in poetry as well as prose, may be studied in the same way. Furthermore, the student may be required to examine more at length a few authors designated by the teacher, in order to determine (1) the proportion of simple, complex, and compound sentences; (2) the proportion of loose, periodic, and balanced sentences; (3) the percentage of Anglo-Saxon or Latin words; and (4) the average number of words in a sentence. The results will give occasion for interesting and instructive comparisons.

## CHAPTER V

### FIGURES OF SPEECH

34. *Definition.* A figure of speech is a deviation from the plain and ordinary mode of speaking. Its object is greater effect. Figures originated, perhaps, in a limitation of vocabulary; and many words that are now regarded as plain were at first figurative. But the use of figures is natural, and at present they are used to embellish discourse and to give it greater vividness and force. To say with Thomson, for example, —

“But yonder comes the powerful King of day,  
Rejoicing in the east,” —

is far more vivid and forceful than to say “the sun is rising.” Nearly all great writers, especially poets, enrich their style by the use of figures.

35. *Kinds of Figures.* There are various kinds of figures, which may be reduced, however, to three classes or groups. The figures based upon *resemblance* are *simile*, *metaphor*, *personification*, and *allegory*. Those founded on *contiguity* are *metonymy*, *synecdoche*, *exclamation*, *hyperbole*, *apostrophe*, and *vision*. Those resting upon *contrast* are *antithesis*, *climax*, *epigram*, and *irony*. Other forms of classification have been proposed. There are figures of *diction* and figures of *thought*; the former are found in the choice of words, the latter in the form of the sentence. To figures of diction has been given the name of *figures of intuition*, because they present a sensible image to the mind; to figures of thought has been given the name of *figures of emphasis*, because they emphasize the thought. We thus get the following division:

#### FIGURES OF INTUITION

Simile  
Metaphor  
Personification  
Allegory  
Metonymy  
Synecdoche



Apostrophe  
Vision

## FIGURES OF EMPHASIS

Interrogation  
Exclamation  
Climax  
Antithesis  
Epigram  
Irony  
Hyperbole

36. *Figures of Resemblance.* (1) *Simile* is a form of comparison in which one thing is likened to another. It is usually introduced by *like* or *as*, or some other word of comparison; as, —

“The twilight hours *like birds* flew by,  
As lightly and as free.”

It is obvious that the things compared in simile should have some sort of resemblance. When the points of resemblance are too remote the simile is said to be farfetched. This was a frequent mistake among the so-called “metaphysical poets” of the seventeenth century. Except in burlesque or mock-heroic styles, dignified subjects should not be likened to what is trifling or low. The effect of such a simile is ridiculous, as in the well-known lines from Butler’s “Hudibras”:

“And, like a lobster boiled, the morn  
From black to red began to turn.”

(2) *Metaphor* is an abridged simile, the words expressing likeness being omitted. In the sentence, “Roderick Dhu fought like a lion, “ we have a simile; but when we say, “He was a lion in the fight, “ we have a metaphor. The metaphor is briefer and more striking than the simile; it springs from greater emotion or mental energy, and often imparts great force or beauty to a passage. Thus, likening human life to a voyage at sea, Shakespeare says:

“There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;

Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries."

There are several errors that are not infrequent in the use of metaphor. A metaphor should not be blended with plain language in the same sentence, nor should it be extended too far. The latter fault is called "straining the metaphor." Two incongruous metaphors should not be used in the same sentence. In the following lines from Addison his muse is first conceived of as a steed that needs to be restrained with a bridle, and then as a ship that is eager to be launched:

"I bridle in my struggling Muse with pain,  
That longs to launch into a bolder strain."

(3) *Personification* is the attribution of life to inanimate things. When we speak of "the *thirsty* ground" or "the *angry* ocean," we endow these objects with the feelings of living creatures. Personification is a bold species of metaphor; it is the offspring of vivid feeling or conception, and often lifts discourse to a high plane. Thus, in "Romeo and Juliet," we read, —

"Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops";

and in Shelley's "Queen Mab," —

"How wonderful is Death,  
Death and his brother Sleep!  
One, pale as yonder waning moon,  
With lips of lurid blue;  
The other, rosy as the morn  
When, throned on ocean's wave,  
It blushes o'er the world:  
Yet both so passing wonderful!"

(4) *Allegory* is the description of one object in terms of another. It is a sort of continued metaphor in which, however, the main subject of discourse is not mentioned. In the following beautiful allegory, the Jewish people are described in the character of a vine: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the

shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. "[72:1]

The *parable* and the *fable* are closely akin to allegory. A parable is a brief narrative of real or imaginary incidents for the purpose of inculcating some moral or religious truth. It has been described as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." A considerable part of Christ's teaching was in parables, many of which are as beautiful as they are profound.

A *fable* is a fictitious story introducing animals or even inanimate things as rational speakers and actors, for the purpose of teaching or enforcing a moral. The fables of Æsop are almost universally known, and the fables of La Fontaine exhibit a high degree of artistic merit.

37. *Figures of Contiguity.* (1) *Metonymy* consists in naming an object by one of its attributes or accompaniments. It is based, not on resemblance, but on relation, such as *cause* and *effect*, *container* and *thing contained*, *material* and *thing made of it*, etc. When we say, for example, that "*gray hairs* are venerable," we mean *old age*, putting an effect for the cause. In the sentence, "*Socrates drank the fatal cup*," the container is put for the thing contained, namely, the deadly hemlock.

The general effect of metonymy is to bring before the mind a definite image, and thus to impart a graphic quality to the style. To say, "The pen is mightier than the sword," is more graphic and forcible than to say, "Literature is mightier than war."

(2) *Synecdoche* puts a part for the whole, or a whole for the part; as, "The harbor was crowded with *masts*." *Synecdoche* is a species of metonymy, and has the same effect of giving vividness. This is apparent in a well-known quatrain from Goethe:

"Who ne'er his *bread* in sorrow ate,  
Who ne'er the mournful *midnight hours*

Weeping upon his bed has sate,  
He knows you not, ye heavenly Powers."

(3) *Exclamation* is a figure of thought. It is the result of kindled emotion, and expresses in exclamatory form what would usually be stated in declarative form. Thus Hamlet, outraged at the conduct of his mother, bursts forth:

"O that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!  
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!"

Though chiefly confined to poetry, exclamation is frequent in fervid prose, and Carlyle's works fairly bristle with exclamation points.

(4) *Apostrophe* is a direct address to the absent as present, the inanimate as living, or the abstract as personal. It is closely allied to personification, with which it is often associated. This figure is expressive of intense emotion. The following passage from "King Lear" will serve for illustration:

"Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!  
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,  
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!"

(5) *Vision* is a description of absent things as present. It is suited only to animated discourse in either prose or poetry. In the midst of the argument of Milton's "Areopagitica" we find this splendid outburst portraying the future of England: "Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks; methinks I see her, as an eagle, mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and scaling her long abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight,



flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms. "

(6) *Hyperbole* is an exaggerated form of statement, and is used to magnify or diminish an object. It is quite natural, under the impulse of strong emotion or imagination, to use exaggerated statements, and frequently it serves to lend piquancy and force to style. But this tendency is dangerous, and should be kept under restraint. As a rule it is best to see and describe things as they are. The following from "Julius Cæsar" will serve as an example of hyperbole:

"Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonorable graves."

38. *Figures of Contrast.* (1) *Antithesis* presents a strong contrast of words or sentiments, usually in the form of balanced sentences. It gives force to style by uniting opposite things in one conception. Its excessive use, however, becomes monotonous; and antithesis in construction, without a real contrast of thought, is confusing and disagreeable. Macaulay, perhaps, makes more frequent use of antithesis than any other of our great modern writers. Of the Puritans he says: "If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God; if their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they felt assured that they were recorded in the Book of Life; if their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. "

(2) *Climax* arranges its words, phrases, or clauses in an order of increasing impressiveness. Its proper use gives an accumulative force to the sentence. No better illustration of the climax can be given than the well-known one in Cicero's oration against Verres: "To bind a Roman citizen is an outrage; to scourge him is an atrocious crime; to put him to death is almost parricide; but to crucify him—what shall I call it? "

The arrangement of the words or clauses in a descending order is called *anticlimax* or *bathos*. It is frequently used in wit and humor. The following sentence is a ridiculous anticlimax: "The enemy is now hovering upon our borders, preparing to press the knife to our

throats, to devastate our fields, to quarter themselves in our houses, and to devour our poultry. “

The principle of the climax is of wide application. Not only in the sentence but also in the paragraph, chapter, and entire work, there should be, as far as possible, progress in the importance, intensity, or amplitude of the thought.

(3) *Interrogation* strengthens an affirmation or denial by throwing it into the form of a question. It is a figure frequent in poetry and emotional prose. The following example from Gray’s “Elegy” will be sufficient for illustration:

“Can storied urn or animated bust  
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?  
Can Honor’s voice provoke the silent dust,  
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?”

These questions are not asked for information, but for rhetorical effect, and they forcibly suggest the truth of their negation.

(4) *Epigram* is the pungent phrasing of a shrewd observation. It may be recognized by two characteristics, —it must be brief, and it must have an unexpected turn of thought. This turn of thought may spring from an apparent contradiction, from the solemn assertion of a truism, from a play on words, or from other sources. There is an apparent contradiction in Wordsworth’s epigrammatic line, —

“The child is father of the man. “

There is a play on words in the following epigrammatic characterization of a loud and violent speaker: “He mistakes *perspiration* for *inspiration*. “

(5) *Irony* expresses a thought contrary to the form of words. Its seeming praise is really condemnation; its compliments are insults. Its advantage lies in the difficulty its victim experiences in making a reply. It is useful in chastising follies and vices; but as a rule ironic touches are to be preferred to continuous irony. The following is from Thackeray: “So was Helen of Greece innocent. She never ran away with Paris, the dangerous young Trojan. Menelaus, her husband, ill-used her; and there never was any siege of Troy at all. So was Bluebeard’s wife innocent. She never peeped into the closet

where the other wives were with their heads off. She never dropped the key, or stained it with blood; and her brothers were quite right in finishing Bluebeard, the cowardly brute! Yes, Madam Laffarge never poisoned her husband, and Mary of Scotland never blew up hers; and Eve never took the apple—it was a cowardly fabrication of the serpent's. “

#### FOOTNOTES:

[72:1] Psalm lxxx. 8-15.

#### REVIEW QUESTIONS

34. What is a figure? How did it originate? What is its object? In what two ways is it used? Illustrate. 35. To how many classes may figures be reduced? On what are these several groups based? Name the figures based on *resemblance*; those based on *contiguity*; on *contrast*. What name is given to figures of *diction*? to figures of *thought*? State the figures of *intuition*; of *emphasis*. 36. What is a *simile*? How is it introduced? Give an illustration. What errors should be avoided in the use of simile? What is a *metaphor*? What is its effect as compared with a simile? What errors in the use of metaphor are to be avoided? What is *mixed metaphor*? Illustrate. What is *personification*? Give an example. What is *allegory*? Illustrate. What is a *parable*? Give an example. What is a *fable*?

37. What is *metonymy*? On what is it based? Illustrate. What is its effect on style? What is *synecdoche*? Illustrate. What is *exclamation*? Illustrate. What is *apostrophe*? To what is it closely related? Illustrate. What is *vision*? Illustrate. What is *hyperbole*? Give an example. What is said of the use of hyperbole?

38. What is *antithesis*? What is said of its use? Give an example. What is *climax*? Give an illustration. What is *bathos*? Illustrate. What is *interrogation*? Illustrate. What is *epigram*? How recognized? Illustrate. What is *irony*? What is said of its use? Illustrate.

#### ILLUSTRATIVE AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES

The following passages should be studied in the light of such questions as these:

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

What figure or figures does the piece contain? Is it a figure of resemblance, contiguity, or contrast? Is it a figure of diction or of thought? What is its effect? Does it give force or beauty to the sentence? How would the thought be expressed in plain language? Is it used consistently? In what way does it strengthen or weaken the sentence? Is the figure trite or original? Is it farfetched or natural? What percentage of sentences is figurative? Are figures more common in prose or poetry? Why? Do the minor or the major poets use more figures?

What stronger breast-plate than a heart untainted?  
Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just;  
And he but naked though locked up in steel  
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

SHAKESPEARE.

Hast thou left thy blue course in heaven, golden-haired son of the sky? The west hath opened its gates; the bed of thy repose is there. The waves gather to behold thy beauty; they lift their trembling heads; they see thee lovely in thy sleep; but they shrink away with fear. Rest in thy shadowy cave, O Sun! and let thy return be in joy. — MACPHERSON.

I see before me the Gladiator lie;  
He leans upon his hand; his manly brow  
Consents to death, but conquers agony,  
And his drooped head sinks gradually low;  
And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow  
From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,  
Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now  
The arena swims around him; he is gone,  
Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed the wretch who  
won.—BYRON.

If a man indulges himself in murder, very soon he comes to think little of robbing; and from robbing he comes next to drinking and Sabbath-breaking, and from that to incivility and procrastination. — DE QUINCEY.

Assemble all the poor men of your sort;  
Draw them to Tiber banks and weep your tears  
Into the channel, till the lowest stream  
Do kiss the most exalted shores of all.—SHAKESPEARE.



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. —  
JOB.

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.—BYRON.

The best of men  
That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer,  
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.—DEKKER.

The glories of our birth and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things;  
There is no armor against fate;  
Death lays his icy hand on kings.  
Scepter and crown  
Must tumble down,  
And in the dust be equal made  
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.—SHIRLEY.

What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in  
faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action  
how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of this  
world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this  
quintessence of dust? man delights not me; no, nor woman neither,  
though by your smiling you seem to say so. —SHAKESPEARE.

Great lords, wise men ne'er sit and wail their loss,  
But cheerly seek how to redress their harms.  
What though the mast be now thrown overboard,  
The cable broke, the holding anchor lost,  
And half our sailors swallowed in the flood?  
Yet lives our pilot still. Is 't meet that he  
Should leave the helm, and, like a fearful lad,  
With tearful eyes, add water to the sea,  
And give more strength to that which hath too much,  
While in his moan the ship splits on the rock,  
Which industry and courage might have saved?  
Ah, what a shame! ah, what a fault were this!  
SHAKESPEARE.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

The unwonted lines which momentary passion had ruled in Mr. Pickwick's clear and open brow gradually melted away, as his young friend spoke, like the marks of a black lead pencil beneath the softening influence of India rubber. —DICKENS.

When thus, as I may say, before the use of the loadstone, or knowledge of the compass, I was sailing in a vast ocean, without other help than *the pole-star* of the ancients, and *the rules* of the French stage among the moderns. —DRYDEN.

Once as I told in glee  
Tales of the stormy sea,  
Soft eyes did gaze on me,  
    Burning but tender;  
And as the white stars shine  
On the dark Norway pine,  
On that dark heart of mine  
    Fell their soft splendor. —LONGFELLOW.

Since the vessel of thy unbounded ambition hath been wrecked in the gulf of thy self-love, it would be proper that thou shouldst take in the sails of thy temerity, and cast the anchor of repentance in the port of sincerity and justice, which is the port of safety; lest the tempest of our vengeance make thee perish in the sea of the punishment thou deservest. —ANON.

She never told her love,  
But let concealment, like a worm in the bud,  
Feed on her damask cheek; she pined in thought;  
And, with a green and yellow melancholy,  
She sat like Patience on a monument,  
Smiling at grief. —SHAKESPEARE.

England ne'er had a king until his time;  
Virtue he had, deserving to command;  
His brandished sword did blind men with its beams;  
His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings;  
His sparkling eyes, replete with awful fire,  
More dazzled, and drove back his enemies,  
Than midday sun fierce beat against their faces.  
What should I say? his deeds exceed all speech;  
He never lifted up his hand, but conquered.  
SHAKESPEARE.

Earth proudly wears the Parthenon,  
As the best gem upon her zone,  
And Morning opes with haste her lids  
To gaze upon the Pyramids;  
O'er England's abbeys bends the sky,  
As on its friends, with kindred eye;  
For out of Thought's interior sphere  
Those wonders rose to upper air;  
And Nature gladly gave them place,  
Adopted them into her race,  
And granted them an equal date  
With Andes and with Ararat.—EMERSON.

#### NOTE

In addition to the extracts here given, the student might examine those connected with previous chapters, and discover the various figures they contain. Furthermore, it is recommended that he study the figures in a whole piece; as Milton's "L' Allegro" or "Il Penseroso," Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," Gray's "Elegy," Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night," Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," Moore's "Paradise and the Peri," Shelley's "Adonais," Tennyson's "Passing of Arthur," Longfellow's "Building of the Ship," Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal," and many others that will occur to the teacher. Let him determine the percentage of figurative sentences, and compare the results with those obtained from an examination of the prose of Macaulay, Ruskin, Carlyle, De Quincey, Lowell, and other standard writers. This comparison will throw light on the essential difference between poetry and prose.

## CHAPTER VI

### STYLE

39. *Definition.* *Style* means an author's mode of expression. It is not, as is sometimes supposed, an artificial trick, but a genuine expression of the mind and character. Buffon had the right idea when he said, "The style is the man." It derives its leading characteristics from the intellect, culture, and character of the writer. A man of independent force and integrity gives natural expression to his personality. His style reveals his mental and moral qualities. Only weaklings, who are afraid to be natural and who are destitute of substantial worth, become conscious imitators or affect artificial peculiarities.

We have already considered style as related to *diction*, *different kinds of sentences*, and *figures of speech*. It remains to consider it, first, in relation to the various kinds of discourse, and, secondly, to the generic types of mind.

40. *Kinds of Discourse.* There are four generic kinds of discourse, namely, *description*, *narration*, *exposition*, and *argument*. Though frequently united in the same work, or even in the same paragraph, they are yet clearly distinguishable. Each has a well-defined purpose and method, to which the mode of expression is naturally bent or adapted. The result is what may be called a descriptive, narrative, expository, or argumentative style. These different kinds of discourse will now be considered and illustrated in greater detail.

(1) *Description* is the portrayal of an object by means of language. The object described may belong either to the material or the spiritual world. It may be a single flower, a landscape, or a stellar system. The purpose of description is to enable the reader to reproduce the scene, object, or experience in his own imagination. In general there are two kinds of description, —the objective and the subjective; but the laws of both are the same. There must be a judicious selection and grouping of the details, and their number must be so restricted as not to produce confusion.

Objective description portrays objects as they exist in the external world. It points out in succession their distinguishing features. Thus we read in Wordsworth's "A Night Piece," —



"The traveller looks up—the clouds are split  
Asunder—and above his head he sees  
The clear moon, and the glory of the heavens.  
There, in a black-blue vault she sails along,  
Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small  
And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss  
Drive as she drives; how fast they wheel away,  
Yet vanish not!—the wind is in the tree,  
But they are silent;—still they roll along  
Immeasurably distant; and the vault  
Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds."

Subjective description notes the effects produced by an external object or scene on the mind and heart. The eye of the writer is turned inward rather than outward; he brings before us the thoughts, feelings, fancies that are started within his soul. Thus Browning speaks of music in his early poem, "Pauline":

"For music (which is earnest of a heaven,  
Seeing we know emotions strange by it,  
Not else to be revealed) is as a voice,  
A low voice calling fancy, as a friend,  
To the green woods in the gay summer time;  
And she fills all the way with dancing shapes  
Which have made painters pale, and they go on,  
While stars look at them and winds call to them,  
As they leave life's path for the twilight world  
Where the dead gather."

(2) *Narration* is a recital of incidents or events in an orderly sequence. It is closely related to description, with which it is frequently joined in the same paragraph. The one is used to aid or supplement the other. Like description, narration has its place in nearly every form of composition; and in history, fiction, and epic poetry it constitutes, perhaps, the body of discourse. The incidents narrated should be selected according to their interest and importance; they should usually be presented in their chronological order, and there should be a perceptible and often a rapid movement toward a definite end. In all artistic narration we find unity, proportion, and completeness. The following extract from Addison's "Vision of Mirza" will serve for illustration: "On the fifth day of the moon—which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always keep holy—after having washed myself and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended

the high hills of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer. As I was here airing myself on the tops of the mountains, I fell into a profound contemplation on the vanity of human life; and, passing from one thought to another, 'Surely, ' said I, 'man is but a shadow, and life a dream. "'

(3) *Exposition* explains the nature or meaning of things. The purpose of description is to form a picture; of narration, to portray an event; of exposition, to set forth the distinctive nature of an object or conception. The methods of exposition are various. In the first place, the distinguishing features of an object may be presented; and in this case exposition partakes of the nature of description. In the second place, an object or idea may be explained by pointing out its effects; and in this case exposition partakes of the character of narration. In the third place, we may explain or define an object or conception by indicating its resemblance or its unlikeness to something else that is known. But whatever method of exposition is adopted, it should be full and definite enough to impart a clear idea of the thing explained. Every text-book will furnish examples of exposition; the following is taken from Hitchcock's "Geology": "A *volcano* is an opening in the earth from whence matter has been ejected by heat, in the form of lava, scoria, or ashes. Usually the opening called the *crater* is an inverted cone; and around it there rises a mountain in the form of a cone, with its apex truncated, produced by the elevation of the earth's crust and the ejection of lava. "

(4) *Argumentation* is the process of establishing the truth or falsity of a thing. The means it uses is called proof or evidence, and will be considered more fully in a subsequent chapter treating of oratory. This proof or evidence may be derived from principles originating in the mind, in which case it is called *intuitive*; or it may be found in external sources, in which case it is called *empirical*. The latter includes, among other forms of proof, a statement of facts, a consideration of the nature or circumstances of the case, the testimony of eyewitnesses, and an appeal to authority or generally accepted principles. When the argument is attended with an appeal to the feelings and will, it is known as *persuasion*. In the following extract, note the three facts adduced by Mark Antony to prove that Cæsar was not ambitious.

"He was my friend, faithful and just to me;  
But Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And Brutus is an honorable man.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

He hath brought many captives home to Rome,  
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:  
Did this in Cæsar seem ambitious?  
When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept:  
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.

\* \* \* \* \*

You all did see that on the Lupercal  
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?"

41. *Generic Differences of Mind.* As we have just seen, style is affected in a measure by the species of discourse. It is determined, further, by the mental constitution of the writer, and varies according to the dominance of particular faculties. We may distinguish four generic types of mind, which are reflected in four fundamental differences of style.

(1) When the logical faculties of the mind predominate, the style will be simple, direct, and plain. It is apt to be dry. The following extract from Locke's "Thoughts on Education" will serve for illustration: "I say this, that, when you consider of the breeding of your son, and are looking out for a schoolmaster, or a tutor, you would not have (as is usual) Latin and logic only in your thoughts. Learning must be had, but in the second place, as subservient only to greater qualities. Seek out somebody that may know how discreetly to frame his manners; place him in hands, where you may, as much as possible, secure his innocence, cherish and nurse up the good, and gently correct and weed out any bad inclinations, and settle in him good habits. This is the main point; and, this being provided for, learning may be had into the bargain. "

(2) Again, the imagination may predominate. In this case the writer is continually leaving the main thought to bring in additional and embellishing ideas, particularly if he is a man of wide experience or great learning. The result is apt to be an elaborate or stately style. Lowell's style is eminently characterized by a play of the imagination. His essay on Spenser begins as follows: "Chaucer had been in his grave one hundred and fifty years ere England had secreted choice material enough for the making of another great poet. The nature of men living together in societies, as of the individual man, seems to have its periodic ebbs and floods, its

oscillations between the ideal and the matter-of-fact, so that the doubtful boundary line of shore between them is in one generation a hard sandy actuality strewn only with such remembrances of beauty as a dead sea-moss here and there, and in the next is whelmed with those lacelike curves of ever-gaining, ever-receding foam, and that dance of joyous spray which for a moment catches and holds the sunshine. "

When the imagination is ill-governed, and especially in the case of inexperienced writers, the resulting style is apt to be florid or bombastic. The following passage from Headley's "Sacred Mountains, " connected with a description of the crucifixion, is imaginative extravagance, —a vain, artificial effort at the sublime: "I know not but all the radiant ranks on high, and even Gabriel himself, turned with the deepest solicitude to the Father's face, to see if He was calm and untroubled amid it all. I know not but His composed brow and serene majesty were all that restrained Heaven from one universal shriek of horror when they heard groans on Calvary—dying groans. I know not but they thought God had given His glory to another, but one thing I *do* know, that when they saw through the vast design, comprehended the stupendous scene, the hills of God shook to a shout that never before rang over their bright tops, and the crystal sea trembled to a song that had never before stirred its bright depths, and the 'Glory to God in the Highest' was a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies. " Thoughtful writers of refined taste are more reserved and reverent in speaking of occurrences in the celestial world.

(3) Again, the sensibilities may be in the ascendant. There is then a quick and full response to the beauties of nature and human life. The style becomes warm, graphic, glowing, pictorial. Unless held in check by intellectual culture, an excess of sensibility is likely to degenerate into sentimentalism. When combined with judgment and imagination, as in the case of Ruskin, an emotional temperament yields admirable results. Take the following splendid passage from "Modern Painters, " descriptive of a sunrise in the Alps: "Wait for one hour, until the east again becomes purple, and the heaving mountains, rolling against the darkness, like waves of a wild sea, are drowned one by one in the glory of its burning; watch the white glaciers blaze in their winding paths about the mountains, like mighty serpents with scales of fire; watch the columnar peaks of solitary snow, kindling downwards, chasm by chasm, each in itself a new morning; their long avalanches cast down in keen streams



brighter than the lightning, sending each its tribute of driven snow, like altar-smoke, up to the heaven; the rose-light of their silent domes flushing that heaven about them and above them, piercing with purer light through its purple lines of lifted cloud, casting a new glory on every wreath as it passes by, until the whole heaven—one scarlet canopy—is interwoven with a roof of waving flame, and tossing, vault beyond vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angels; and then, when you can look no more for gladness, and when you are bowed down with fear and love of the Maker and Doer of this, tell me who has best delivered this His message unto men! “

(4) Once more, force of will, firmness of conviction, energy of character are conducive to strength. Where these exist there will be directness of aim, and the style will be clear, unwavering, and strong. There will be positiveness of statement, and sometimes intolerant dogmatism. Carlyle and Macaulay are among our strongest writers, the former being rugged, and the latter more polished in his strength. Macaulay's broad-shouldered, stout-limbed constitution is reflected in such passages as the following from his essay on Lord Bacon: “The moral qualities of Bacon were not of a high order. We do not say that he was a bad man. He was not inhuman or tyrannical. He bore with meekness his high civil honors, and the far higher honors gained by his intellect. He was very seldom, if ever, provoked into treating any person with malignity and insolence. No man more readily held up the left cheek to those who had smitten the right. No man was more expert at the soft answer which turneth away wrath. His faults were—we write it with pain—coldness of heart and meanness of spirit. He seems to have been incapable of feeling strong affection, of facing great dangers, of making great sacrifices. His desires were set on things below. Wealth, precedence, titles, patronage, the mace, the seals, the coronet, large houses, fair gardens, rich manors, massive services of plate, gay hangings, curious cabinets, had as great attractions for him as for any of the courtiers who dropped on their knees in the dirt when Elizabeth passed, and then hastened home to write to the King of Scots that her Grace seemed to be breaking fast. “

42. *Symmetrical Faculties.* When the mental faculties are symmetrical and harmonious in their operation, no particular feature of style may stand out prominent. It will bend to suit the exigencies of the subject. It will rise and sink with the varying thought and feeling. It will be judicious, and at times commonplace. But if, at the same time, mental

symmetry is united with fineness of fiber and with adequate culture and practice, the style will probably be, as in the case of Addison and Irving, full of grace and elegance. Note the easy grace with which Addison begins his first paper on the "Pleasures of the Imagination": "Our sight is the most perfect and most delightful of all our senses. It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, and continues longest in action without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments. The sense of feeling can indeed give us a notion of extension, shape, and all other ideas that enter at the eye, except colors; but at the same time it is very much strained, and confined in its operations, to the number, bulk, and distance of its particular objects. Our sight seems designed to supply all these defects, and may be considered as a more delicate and diffusive kind of touch, that spreads itself over an infinite multitude of bodies, comprehends the largest figures, and brings into our reach some of the most remote parts of the universe. "

Every passing mood and every peculiarity of mind or character are reflected in the style. It may be gay, humorous, serious, sad, melancholy, according to the state of the writer's feelings. It may be colloquial or stately, concise or diffuse, plain or florid, flowing or abrupt, feeble or energetic, natural or affected, commonplace or epigrammatic, —as varied, in fact, as the character and mental constitution of the writers. But every writer has a prevailing style; and it is an interesting study to determine the nature of his mind and character from his works.

43. *Importance of Style.* A good style is a matter of importance. The success or failure of a literary work depends largely upon the manner in which its statements are presented. The classic works of Greece and Rome owe their popularity and influence not so much to the facts which they contain as to the art with which their contents are given. Our most popular English writings, especially in fiction and poetry, owe their vogue, in no small degree, to some excellence or charm of style. It is chiefly in history, science, and philosophy that the weight of fact and thought may be in a measure independent of style. Darwin's "Origin of Species" would be a great book even if its style were far more uninteresting than is really the case.

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

39. What is *style*? Whence does it derive its characteristics? What is Buffon's remark? Who become imitators? 40. What four general kinds of discourse are there? To what four kinds of style do they

lead? What is *description*? What is its purpose? What two kinds of description are there? Illustrate. What is *narration*? How is it related to description? Where is it dominant? How should its facts be presented? What is necessary in artistic narration? Illustrate. What is *exposition*? How does it differ from description and narration? What three kinds of exposition are mentioned? What constitutes a good exposition? Illustrate. What is *argumentation*? What means does it use? What two kinds of proof are mentioned? What may constitute *empirical* proof? Illustrate.

41. What further determines style? What four generic types of mind are there? What is the result when the logical faculties are dominant? What is the effect of a dominant imagination? What author is quoted in illustration? When the imagination is ill-regulated, what is the result? What illustration is given? What is the effect of strong sensibilities? Into what may sentiment degenerate? What is the result when combined with judgment and imagination? Who is quoted in illustration? What is the effect of will power? Who are mentioned as strong writers?

42. What is said of symmetrical faculties? What will be the result when united with delicacy and culture? Who are mentioned in illustration? What may be reflected in style? What kinds of style thus result? Why has every writer a distinctive style? 43. Why is a good style important? To what do many writings, ancient and modern, owe their popularity?

## ILLUSTRATIVE AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES

The following extracts should be carefully studied. The diction, forms of sentences, and figures, as presented in the two preceding chapters, may be investigated along with the further elements of style just considered. Such questions as the following may be applied to the selections:

What kind of discourse is it? Is it descriptive? Is it objective or subjective? What points are described? Is it narrative? Is it expository? By what means is the elucidation made? Is it argumentative? What kind of proof is used? Is the thought the chief concern of the writer? Is the piece imaginative? Does it abound in adjectives? Does it present pictures? Is it stately and in full dress? What faculty predominates? Does it glow with feeling? Does it reach the point of sentimentalism? Does it show a love of nature? of

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

humanity? Do the emotions count for more than the thought? Is it energetic or vehement? Has the writer positive convictions? Is he hesitating or dogmatic? Is it graceful or elegant? Does it exhibit eccentricity or sanity? Is it smooth, abrupt, laconic, epigrammatic, humorous, colloquial? Are there other characteristics?

Long lines of cliff breaking have left a chasm;  
And in the chasm are foam and yellow sands;  
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf  
In cluster; then a mouldered church; and higher  
A long street climbs to one tall-towered mill;  
And high in heaven behind it a gray down  
With Danish barrows; and a hazel-wood,  
By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes  
Green in a cuplike hollow of the down. —TENNYSON.

The Normans gave way. The English pressed forward. A cry went forth among the Norman troops that Duke William was killed. Duke William took off his helmet, in order that his face might be distinctly seen, and rode along the line before his men. This gave them courage. As they turned again to face the English, some of the Norman horse divided the pursuing body of the English from the rest, and thus all that foremost portion of the English army fell, fighting bravely. —DICKENS.

Poetry of late has been termed a force, or mode of force, very much as if it were the heat, or light, or motion known to physics. And, in truth, ages before our era of scientific reductions, the *energia*—the vital energy—of the minstrel's song was undisputed. It seems to me, in spite of all we hear about materialism, that the sentiment imparting this energy—the poetic impulse, at least—has seldom been more forceful than at this moment.

STEDMAN.

How inexhaustibly the spirit grows!  
One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach  
With her whole energies and die content, —  
So like a wall at the world's edge it stood,  
With nought beyond to live for, — is that reached? —  
Already are new undreamed energies  
Outgrowing under, and extending farther  
To a new object; there's another world! —BROWNING.



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

I have heard that nothing gives an author so great pleasure as to find his works respectfully quoted by other learned authors. This pleasure I have seldom enjoyed; for though I have been, if I may say it without vanity, an eminent author (of almanacs) annually, now a full quarter of a century, my brother authors in the same way (for what reason I know not) have ever been very sparing in their applauses; and no other author has taken the least notice of me: so that, did not my writings produce me some solid pudding, the great deficiency of praise would have quite discouraged me. — FRANKLIN.

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business; for expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies, is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar: they perfect nature, and are perfected by experience; for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large except they be bounded in by experience. — BACON.

We want the same glorious privileges which we enjoy to go down to our children. We cannot sleep well the last sleep, nor will the pillow of dust be easy to our heads until we are assured that the God of our American institutions in the past, will be the God of our American institutions in the days that are to come. Oh, when all the rivers which empty into the Atlantic and Pacific seas shall pull on factory bands, when all the great mines of gold, and silver, and iron, and coal shall be laid bare for the nation, when the last swamp shall be reclaimed, and the last jungle cleared, and the last American desert Edenized, and from sea to sea the continent shall be occupied by more than twelve hundred million souls, may it be found that moral and religious influences were multiplied in more rapid ratio than the population. And then there shall be four doxologies coming from north, and south, and east, and west—four doxologies rolling toward each other and meeting mid-continent with such dash of holy joy that they shall mount to the throne.

TALMAGE.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:  
Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
How sweet his music! on my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!  
He, too, is no mean preacher;  
Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your teacher. —WORDSWORTH.

She is sensible of my sufferings. This morning her look pierced to my very soul. I found her alone, and she was silent; she steadfastly surveyed me. I no longer saw in her face the charm of beauty or the fire of genius; these had disappeared. But I was affected by an expression much more touching, a look of the deepest sympathy and of the softest pity. Why was I afraid to throw myself at her feet? Why did I not dare to take her in my arms, and answer her by a thousand kisses? She had recourse to her piano for relief, and in a low and sweet voice accompanied the music with delicious sounds. Her lips never appeared so lovely; they seemed but just to open, that they might imbibe the sweet tones which issued from the instrument, and return the heavenly vibration from her lovely mouth. Oh! who can express my sensations? I was quite overcome, and, bending down, pronounced this vow: "Beautiful lips, which the angels guard, never will I seek to profane your purity with a kiss."

GOETHE.

The only happiness a brave man ever troubled himself with asking much about was happiness enough to get his work done. Not "I can't eat!" but "I can't work!" that was the burden of all wise complaining among men. It is, after all, the one unhappiness of a man. That he cannot work; that he cannot get his destiny as a man fulfilled. Behold, the day is passing swiftly over, our life is passing swiftly over; and the night cometh, wherein no man can work. The night once come, our happiness, our unhappiness, —it is all abolished; vanished, clean gone; a thing that has been: not of the slightest consequence whether we were as happy as eueptic Curtis, as the fattest pig of Epicurus, or unhappy as Job with potsherds, as musical Byron with Giaours and sensibilities of the heart. But our work, —behold, that is not abolished, that has not vanished: our work, behold, it remains, or the want of it remains; for endless Times and Eternities, remains; and that is now the sole question with us forevermore. —CARLYLE.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Among the powers in man which suffer by this too intense life of the *social* instincts, none suffers more than the power of dreaming. Let no man think this a trifle. The machinery for dreaming planted in the human brain was not planted for nothing. That faculty, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy. And the dreaming organ, in connection with the heart, the eye, and the ear, composes the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of the sleeping mind. —DE QUINCEY.

Thus with the year  
Seasons return; but not to me returns  
Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn  
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,  
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;  
But cloud instead and ever-during dark  
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men  
Cut off, and, for the book of knowledge fair,  
Presented with a universal blank  
Of Nature's works, to me expunged and rased,  
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.

MILTON.

It happened one day, about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand. I stood like one thunder-struck, or as if I had seen an apparition. I listened, I looked around me, I could hear nothing, nor see anything. I went up to a rising ground to look farther. I went up the shore, and down the shore, but it was all one, I could see no other impressions but that one. I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my fancy; but there was no room for that, for there was exactly the very print of a foot, toes, heel, and every part of a foot. How it came thither I knew not, nor could in the least imagine. —DEFOE.

### NOTE

It would be well to apply the critical principles of this chapter, and indeed of the entire Part Second, to some brief but complete work. For this purpose the teacher might assign Macaulay's "Essay on Milton," De Quincey's "Joan of Arc," Tennyson's "Enoch Arden,"

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Webster's "First Bunker Hill Oration, " or some other similar work. After determining the diction, prevailing type of sentences, and figures of speech, let the student divide the work, as far as possible, into its descriptive, narrative, expository, argumentative, and persuasive portions. In many cases the various kinds of discourse will be so interwoven that the classification will be doubtful and difficult. At the same time the student might point out the passages in which thought, imagination, feeling, or energy of will predominates in a marked degree. The effort should be made accurately to characterize the author's style as a whole.



PART THIRD

KINDS OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER VII

NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF POETRY

44. *Definition.* We may approximately define poetry as the metrical expression of lofty or beautiful thought, feeling, or action, in imaginative and artistic form. Its metrical character distinguishes it from prose; for there is no such thing as prose poetry, though we sometimes find, as in the best passages of Ruskin, poetical prose. Its æsthetic idea or content, its exquisite diction, and its artistic form distinguish genuine poetry from mere verse, which is the mechanical or unartistic expression of commonplace thought, feeling, or incident. Poetry is, in large measure, a product of the creative imagination; and in its highest forms there must be energy of passion, intensity yet delicacy of feeling, loftiness of thought, depth and clearness of intuitive vision. It is the metrical expression of an exaltation of soul, which sometimes suffuses the objects of nature and the scenes of human life with a beauty and glory of its own, —

“The light that never was on sea or land,  
The consecration and the poet’s dream.”

45. *Poetry and Prose.* Poetry occupies a region above prose. While prose in its highest flights approaches the plane of poetry, and poetry in its lowest descent touches the level of prose, they are yet essentially different. The one is commonplace, the other elevated or ideal. This truth is brought out clearly when we compare the same fact or incident of history as related in poetry and prose. The “Æneid” is very unlike a prose account of the founding of Rome. We sometimes say in plain prose, “The evening passed pleasantly and quickly”; but when the poet describes it, there is an elevation of thought and glow of feeling that make it ideal:

“The twilight hours like birds flew by,  
As lightly and as free;  
Ten thousand stars were in the sky,  
Ten thousand in the sea.  
For every wave with dimpled face

That leaped upon the air,  
Had caught a star in its embrace,  
And held it trembling there."

46. *Sources of Poetry.* Nature is filled with poetry. The great poet is God, and he has filled the universe with rhythm, harmony, beauty. Human poems are but faulty shells gathered on the shore of the divine ocean of poetry. The stars are the poetry of the skies. The planets and stellar systems that circle in their glorious orbits preserve a sublime harmony of movement. The light that reaches us from distant worlds comes to us in rhythmical wavelets. Every human life is a poem, —often an amusing comedy, but still oftener a moving tragedy. The tender friendships, the innocent joys, the noble aspirations, the high achievements of men, form the lyric poetry of human existence. The rippling of the forest stream within its shady banks of fern, the rhythmical roll and heavy roar of the ocean surges, are the poetry of the sparkling waters. The audible silence and mysterious whisperings of the dark and majestic forest, the modest hiding of the little violet that gives charm to some neglected spot, — this is the poetry of the woods and fields. Whether we look upon earth, or air, or sky, we may be sure that the unwritten poetry of God is there. In our best moments we feel its presence, —its mute yet eloquent appeal to our higher natures. It lifts us up into fellowship with Him who thus speaks to us.

47. *The Poet.* When material interests dominate the life of a people, the poet is generally undervalued. He is apt to be regarded as an unpractical, or even an eccentric and valueless member of society. Too often the eccentricities of genius afford some basis for this prejudice; but it is wholly groundless in the case of the largest and most gifted of the poetic race. High poetic gifts are favorable to the noblest types of manhood. The great poet, beyond all other men, possesses an intuitive insight into truth, depth of feeling, and appreciation of beauty. These gifts lift the poet out of the rank of common men, and make him, in his moments of highest inspiration, a prophet to his people. In the language of Bailey in his "Festus, "—

"Poetry is itself a thing of God;  
He made His prophets poets, and the more  
We feel of poesy, do we become  
Like God in love and power—under makers."

Among the greatest of every nation, whether ancient or modern, poets stand almost preëminent. In the Old Testament history there is no one greater than "the sweet Psalmist of Israel." Homer stands in almost solitary grandeur in the early annals of Greece. In the history of Italy, what name is to be placed above that of Dante? In England there are, perhaps, no names to be ranked above those of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, whose imperishable works abide with us, and in no small degree mould the thought and feeling of each succeeding generation. And among the illustrious citizens of our own country there are few or none who have reached a higher nobility of character than its great singers, —Longfellow, Bryant, Whittier, Hayne, and Lowell. Their lives were no less sane than beautiful.

48. *The Poet as Seer.* The poet is preëminently a seer. He discerns the divine beauty and truth of life which escape the common sight; and because he reveals them to us in his melodious art he becomes an exalted teacher. In the midst of the tumults of greed and gain he lifts up his voice to witness of higher things. In the presence of what seemed to her a sordid generation, Mrs. Browning calls poets

"The only truth-tellers now left to God,  
The only speakers of essential truth,  
Opposed to relative, comparative,  
And temporal truths; the only holders by  
His sun-skirts, through conventional gray glooms;  
The only teachers who instruct mankind,  
From just a shadow on a charnel-wall,  
To find man's veritable stature out,  
Erect, sublime—the measure of a man."

The poet, with his intenser nature, gives expression to our deepest thoughts and feelings. What we have often felt but vaguely, he utters for us in imperishable forms. In how many things Shakespeare has voiced the human soul! While poetry has rippling measures suited to our smiles, it belongs, in its richest form, to the deeper side of our nature. Its loftiest numbers are given to truth and righteousness, to the tragic strivings and sorrows of life, and to the mysteries of deathless love.

49. *Versification.* Versification is the science of making verse. The unit or starting point in versification is the syllable, which may be *long* or *short*, according to the time it requires in pronouncing, and *accented*

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

or *unaccented*, according to the stress of tone with which it is pronounced. *Quantity*, by which is meant the length of syllables, formed the basis of versification in Latin and Greek poetry; but in English poetry it is used to give variety, music, or some other element of effectiveness to the verse. This may be illustrated in a well-known passage from Pope:

“When Ajax strives some rock’s vast weight to throw,  
The line, too, labors, and the words move slow;  
Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,  
Flies o’er the unbending corn, and skims along the main.”

The first two lines occupy more time in reading than the last two, the sound in each case corresponding in some measure to the sense. An examination of the lines will show that the first two have more long vowel sounds than the last two, and that these and other vowel sounds are lengthened in pronunciation by the presence of difficult consonant combinations. “Ajax strives” and “rock’s vast weight” are not phrases that slip quickly from the tongue. Furthermore, the second line is lengthened by no fewer than three pauses.

The principle of English verse is *accent*, and not *quantity*. In the line,

“The mossy marbles rest, “

it will be observed that every other syllable receives a stress of voice or is accented. The scheme of the verse may be represented as follows:



the line being broken up into three equal and similar parts, each of which is called a *foot*. The foot consisting of an unaccented followed by an accented syllable is called an *iambus*.

In the line,

“Home they brought her warrior dead, “



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

we observe that beginning with the first syllable every other one is accented, giving us the following as the scheme of the verse:



The last foot is obviously incomplete or *catalectic*. The foot that consists of two syllables, the first of which is accented, is called a *trochee*. It is the opposite of the *iambus*.

Again, in the line,

"This is the forest primeval; the murmuring pines and the  
hemlocks, "

it will be noticed that, beginning with the first, each accented syllable is followed by two unaccented syllables, except in the last foot, which is a *trochee*. The scheme of the verse is as follows:



This foot, consisting of one accented syllable, followed by two unaccented syllables, is called a *dactyl*.

Once more, in the line,

"Through the depths of Loch Katrine the steed shall career, "

the third syllable is accented, and the scheme of the verse may be thus indicated:



This foot, which is the opposite of the dactyl, is known as the *anapest*.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

A *spondee* is a foot of two equally accented syllables; as, *mainspring*, *sea-maid*. There is still another foot, known as the *amphibrach*, which consists of three syllables, the second of which is accented, as in the word *de-ni'-al*. The scheme of the following line,

"The flesh was a picture for painters to study, "

may be indicated thus:

u / u | u / u | u / u | u / u .

But nearly all English poetry is based upon the four feet, —*iambus*, *trochee*, *dactyl*, and *anapest*, —first given.

50. *Meters*. A verse is named from the number of prevailing feet. A verse containing one iambic foot is called *iambic monometer*; two feet, *iambic dimeter*; three feet, *iambic trimeter*; four feet, *iambic tetrameter*; five feet, *iambic pentameter*; six feet, *iambic hexameter*. The line,

"The twilight hours like birds flew by, "

is made up of four iambic feet, and is therefore an *iambic tetrameter*. *Iambic pentameter*, in which Milton's "Paradise Lost, " much of Pope's poetry, Shakespeare's dramas, and, indeed, a large proportion of English verse, are written, is called *heroic measure*.

In like manner we have *trochaic monometer*, *dimeter*, *trimeter*, *tetrameter*, *pentameter*, and *hexameter*. The following line,

"As unto the bow the cord is, "

is *trochaic tetrameter*, which is the meter of "Hiawatha. "

The foregoing are called dissyllabic meters; but the trisyllabic measures have the same names according to the number of feet. A verse consisting of a single dactyl is thus *dactylic monometer*; of two dactyls, *dactylic dimeter*; and so on up to *dactylic hexameter*, which is the meter of Homer's "Iliad, " Vergil's "Æneid, " and Longfellow's "Evangeline" and "Courtship of Miles Standish. " The line,

"Softly the breezes descend in the valley, "

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

is *dactylic tetrameter*, though the last foot is a trochee.

In like manner we have anapestic lines of all lengths from monometer to hexameter. The line,

“How she smiled, and I could not but love, ”

contains three anapests, and is therefore *anapestic trimeter*.

But the time element of a poetic foot is important, as it explains the seeming irregularities often met with in verse. An additional syllable may be added to a foot or subtracted from it when the *time* of the foot or verse is not changed. By rapid utterance two syllables are often equal to one, and in this way an anapest is frequently used with the *time* value of an iambus. In like manner a pause may sometimes take the place of an unaccented syllable. Both cases are fully illustrated in Tennyson's well-known lyric, —

“Break, break, break,  
On thy cold gray stones, O sea!”

In spite of the seeming irregularity of this poem, the presence of the proper *time* element, together with the regular accents, preserves its metrical harmony.

There are few poems without slight metrical irregularities. The meter is varied to prevent monotony, to give emphasis to a word, or to respond better to some turn of the thought or feeling. Take, for example, the following couplet from Wordsworth:

“To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

The meter is iambic pentameter; but the first foot of the second line is a trochee, and emphasizes *thoughts* with fine effect. The time of the line remains unchanged.

In Milton we read, —

“Leviathan, which God of all his works  
Created hugest that swim the ocean stream.”

This is likewise iambic pentameter; but in the second line a clumsy anapestic foot is inserted to correspond to the nature of the monster described. No doubt irregularities sometimes occur by oversight or from lack of skill; but with our greater poets, whose thought and emotion instinctively assume the proper metrical form, the irregularities are motivated.

51. *Rhyme.* *Rhyme*, or as it is more correctly spelled *rime*, is a similarity of sound between words or syllables. Identity of sound, as *heir*, *air*, *site*, *sight*, is not rhyme. It usually occurs between words at the end of a verse, and serves to lend both beauty and emphasis to poetry. The order in which rhymes occur is various. They may be found in succeeding lines; as, —

“The tear down childhood’s cheek that flows  
Is like the dewdrop on the rose;  
When next the summer breeze comes by,  
And shakes the bush, the flower is dry.”

They may occur in alternate lines; as, —

“The sun has long been set;  
The stars are out by twos and threes;  
The little birds are piping yet  
Among the bushes and the trees.”

Or the rhymes may occur at longer intervals; as, —

“I envy not in any *moods*  
The captive void of noble rage,  
The linnet born within the cage,  
That never knew the summer *woods*.”

In *double rhyme* the correspondence of sound extends to two syllables, and in *triple rhyme* to three. A *double rhyme*, as *pleasure*, *measure*, is also called *feminine*, while single rhymes are called *masculine*. The following illustrates both *double*, or *feminine*, and *masculine* rhymes:

“‘Tis the hour when happy faces  
Smile around the taper’s light;  
Who will fill our vacant places?  
Who will sing our songs to-night?”



The following from Hood illustrates *triple rhyme*:

"Take her up *tenderly*,  
Lift her with care;  
Fashioned so *slenderly*,  
Young and so fair."

*Triple rhyme* is usually employed only in a light, satirical, or mocking vein. Byron uses it frequently in his frivolous or reckless moods; for example, —

"O world that was and is! What is *cosmogony*?  
Some people have accused me of *misanthropy*,  
And yet I know no more than the *mahogany*  
That forms this desk of what they mean; *lycanthropy*  
I comprehend; for, without transformation  
Men become wolves on any slight occasion."

*Middle rhyme* is that which exists between the middle and final words or syllables of a verse. It is frequently used in the "The Ancient Mariner: "

"The fair breeze *blew*, the white foam *flew*,  
The furrow followed free;  
We were the *first* that ever *burst*  
Into that silent sea."

*Sectional rhyme* is that occurring in the first half or section of a verse; as, —

"*Lightly* and *brightly* breaks away  
The morning from her mantle gray."

*Alliteration* is the use of the same letter at the beginning of two or more words or syllables in the same verse or successive verses. It was the determining principle in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and has remained ever since a source of harmony in English verse. Its effects are sometimes most pleasing when the alliteration turns on one or more internal syllables. The following from Mrs. Browning's "Romance of the Swan's Nest" will serve for illustration:

"Little Ellie sits alone,  
And the smile she softly uses

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Fills the silence like a speech,  
While she thinks *what* shall be done,  
And the sweetest pleasure chooses  
For her future within reach."

The light rippling melody of this stanza is due, in considerable measure, to its fine alliterative structure.

Tennyson likewise makes effective use of alliteration, as may be noted especially in the matchless lyrics interspersed throughout "The Princess." A single stanza will make this clear:

"The splendor falls on castle walls  
And snowy summits old in story;  
The long light shakes across the lakes  
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying."

52. *Stanzas.* A stanza is a separate division of a poem, and contains two or more lines or verses. A stanza of two lines is called a *couplet*; of three lines, a *triplet*; of four lines, a *quatrain*. Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" is in two-line stanza:

"Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something  
new;  
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they  
shall do."

His "Two Voices" is in the triplet stanza:

"A still small voice spake unto me,  
'Thou art so full of misery,  
Were it not better not to be?'

"Then to the still small voice I said,  
'Let me not cast in endless shade  
What is so wonderfully made.'"

Numerous examples of the four-line stanza have already been given.

*Rhyme royal* is a seven-line stanza invented by Chaucer. As will be seen from the following example, it is made up of iambic pentameter

lines, the first four forming a quatrain of alternate rhymes, the fifth line repeating the rhyme of the fourth, and the last two lines forming a rhyming couplet. Its scheme is *a b a b b c c*, in which the same letters indicate rhymes.

“For lo! the sea that fleets about the land,  
And like a girdle clips her solid waist,  
Music and measure both doth understand,  
For his great crystal eye is always cast  
Up to the moon, and on her fixeth fast;  
And as she circles in her pallid sphere,  
So danceth he about the centre here.”

*Ottava rima* is composed of eight iambic pentameter verses with alternate rhymes, except the last two lines, which form a rhymed couplet. Byron's "Don Juan" is written in this stanza. The scheme of rhyme is *a b a b a b a c*.

“‘Tis sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark  
Bay deep-mouthed welcome as we draw near home;  
‘Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark  
Our coming, and look brighter when we come;  
‘Tis sweet to be awakened by the lark  
Or lulled by falling waters; sweet the hum  
Of bees, the voice of girls, the song of birds,  
The lisp of children, and their earliest words.”

The *Spenserian stanza*, invented by Edmund Spenser and employed by him in the "Faerie Queene," is a difficult but effective form of poetry. It consists of nine verses, the first eight being iambic pentameter, and the ninth line iambic hexameter, or Alexandrine. Its rhyme scheme is *a b a b b c b c c*. The following from Byron's "Childe Harold" will serve for illustration:

“To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,  
To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,  
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,  
And mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been;  
To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,  
With the wild flock that never needs a fold;  
Alone o'er steeps and foaming falls to lean;  
This is not solitude; 'tis but to hold  
Converse with Nature's charms, and view her stores unrolled.”

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

The principal hymn stanzas are known as *long meter*, *common meter*, and *short meter*. The *long-meter* stanza is composed of four iambic tetrameter lines, rhyming either alternately or in couplets; as,

“Wide as the world is Thy command;  
Vast as eternity Thy love;  
Firm as a rock Thy truth must stand,  
When rolling years shall cease to move.”

The *common-meter* stanza contains four iambic lines, the first and third being tetrameter, and the second and fourth trimeter. The rhymes are alternate; as,

“Eternity, with all its years,  
Stands present to Thy view;  
To Thee there’s nothing old appears,  
To Thee there’s nothing new.”

The *short-meter* stanza consists of four iambic lines, the first, second, and fourth being trimeter, and the third tetrameter. The rhymes are alternate; as,

“Let good or ill befall,  
It must be good for me;  
Secure of having Thee in all,  
Of having all in Thee.”

53. *Blank Verse*. Unrhymed poetry, usually in iambic pentameter measure, is known as *blank verse*. It is our ordinary epic and dramatic verse, as exemplified in Shakespeare and Milton. Blank verse has greater freedom than rhymed verse, but the attainment of a high degree of excellence in it is scarcely less difficult. It approaches the ease and freedom of prose, and perhaps for that reason it is apt to sink below a high level of poetry.

Apart from its diction and meter, the harmony of blank verse depends upon two things, —namely, its *pauses* and its *periods*. The rhythmical pause occurring in a line is called a *cæsure*. Though usually falling near the middle of the line, the *cæsural* pause may occur at any point, and sometimes there may be two *cæsuras*. There is generally a rhythmical pause at the end of a verse, and when this pause is stressed by a completion of the sense the line is said to be “end-stopt”; but if the sense awaits completion in the following verse, the line is said to be “run-on.” The French name *enjambement*



is sometimes used to designate a "run-on" line. The following extract from Thomson will serve to illustrate the *cæsural* pauses, as well as "end-stopt" and "run-on" lines:

"These as they change, | Almighty Father, | these  
Are but the varied God. | The rolling year  
Is full of thee. | Forth in the pleasant Spring  
Thy beauty walks, | thy tenderness and love.  
Wide flush the fields; | the softening air is balm;  
Echo the mountains round; the forest smiles;  
And every sense, | and every heart, is joy.  
Then comes thy glory | in the summer months  
With light and heat refulgent. | Then thy sun  
Shoots full perfection | through the swelling year."

By *period* is meant the conclusion of the sentence. The *period* or end of a sentence may fall at the end of a line or at any point in it. The period serves to break up the poem into longer or shorter parts. In Milton the sentences are generally long, and the periods thus break up the poem into a sort of stanza of varying length. "Run-on" lines are the prevailing type; and this fact, in connection with the length of the sentences and the constant shifting of the pauses, imparts to his "Paradise Lost" its peculiar organ roll. The following passage will serve to make this clear:

"Of man's first disobedience, | and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, | whose mortal taste  
Brought death into our world, | and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, | till one greater Man  
Restore us, | and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heavenly Muse, | that on the secret top  
Of Oreb, | or of Sinai, | didst inspire  
That shepherd | who first taught the chosen seed  
In the beginning | how the heavens and earth  
Rose out of Chaos.

"Or, if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, | and Siloa's brook that flowed  
Fast by the oracle of God, | I thence  
Invoke thy aid | to my adventurous song,  
That with no middle flight | intends to soar  
Above the Aonian mount, | while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet | in prose or rhyme."

These sixteen lines practically make two stanzas. Twelve lines, or three fourths of the whole number, are "run-on." The cæsural *pause*, as will be seen on counting the feet in connection with which they occur, is exceedingly varied.

With the two foregoing extracts may be compared the following from Shelley's "Alastor," in which all the periods are "end-stopt," and divide the selection into clearly recognizable and almost regular stanzas. It will be noted that the movement and effect are very different from those of Thomson and Milton.

"There was a poet | whose untimely tomb  
No human hand | with pious reverence reared,  
But the charmed eddies | of autumnal winds  
Built o'er his mouldering bones | a pyramid  
Of mouldering leaves | in the waste wilderness.

"A lovely youth, | no mourning maiden decked  
With weeping flowers | or votive cypress wreath  
The lone couch | of his everlasting sleep;  
Gentle and brave and generous, | no lorn bard  
Breathed o'er his dark fate | one melodious sigh;  
He lived, he died, he sang, | in solitude.

"Strangers have wept | to hear his passionate notes;  
And virgins, | as unknown he passed, | have pined  
And wasted | for fond love of his wild eyes.

"The fire of those soft orbs | has ceased to burn,  
And Silence, | too enamored of that voice,  
Locks its mute music | in her rugged cell."

It will be observed that not only all the periods, but also twelve out of the seventeen lines are "end-stopt."

54. *Poetic Style.* By poetic style is meant the choice and arrangement of words peculiar to poetry. While in the main poetic and prose diction is the same, still there are words and verbal combinations admissible only in poetry. Poetry strives after concreteness and vividness of expression. Such words as *steed*, *swain*, *wight*, *muse*, *Pegasus*, *yclept*, *a-cold*, *sprent*, *bower*, *meed*, *isle*, *a-field*, *dight*, *sooth*, *hight*, and many others, are hardly ever met with in ordinary prose. Their prose equivalents are generally preferred.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Poetry uses great freedom, called *poetic license*, in the order of words and construction of sentences. The principal deviations from the prose order are as follows:

- (1) The verb may precede the subject for the sake of emphasis or meter; as,

*"Came a troop with broad swords swinging. "*

- (2) The verb may follow its object; as,

*"Thee, shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,  
And all their echoes, mourn. "*

- (3) The infinitive may precede the word on which it depends; as,

*"When first thy sire, to send on earth  
Virtue, his darling child, designed."*

- (4) Prepositional phrases may precede the verbs they modify; as,

*"Of man's first disobedience, sing, Heavenly Muse. "*

- (5) The preposition may follow the noun it governs; as,

*"From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,  
Leaps the live thunder."*

- (6) Adverbs may precede the words they modify; as,

*"The plowman homeward plods his weary way. "*

- (7) Condensed expressions in the form of compound epithets are frequently used; as,

*"O music, sphere-descended maid! "*

- (8) An expletive pronoun may be used to throw the subject after the verb; as,

*"It ceased, the melancholy sound. "*

- (9) The relative pronoun may be omitted; as,

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

“’Tis fancy, in her fiery car,  
Transports me to the thickest war.”

(10) Intransitive verbs are sometimes used with an objective case; as,

“Still in harmonious intercourse they *lived*  
The rural *day*, and *talked* the flowing *heart*.”

(11) Archaic or antiquated words and modes of expression may be used; as,

“*Whilome* in Albion’s isle there dwelt a youth  
Who *ne* in virtue’s ways did take delight.”

(12) The noun may precede the adjective modifying it; as,

“The willows, and the hazel *copses green*.”

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

44. What is poetry? How is it distinguished from prose? What is the difference between poetry and verse? 45. What is the relative position of *poetry* and *prose*? Illustrate the difference. 46. What is the source of poetry? What is said of human life? What constitutes its lyric poetry? Mention some mental aspects of nature. 47. How is the poet regarded in a materialistic age? With what is the great poet gifted? What is Bailey’s estimate of poets? What is said of the rank of great poets? Mention some of the world’s greatest poets. 48. Why is the poet called a *seer*? What is his relation to his contemporaries? What does Mrs. Browning say of poets? What is said of Shakespeare? To what class of themes does the best poetry give itself?

49. What is versification? What is its unit? How are syllables distinguished? What is the function of *quantity* in English verse? Illustrate. What is the principle of English verse? What is a metrical foot? Define *iambus*? Illustrate. Define a *trochee*, with example. When is a verse or foot *catalectic*? Define a *dactyl*, with illustration. Define an *anapest*, with example. Define a *spondee*; *amphibrach*, with example.

50. How is a verse named? What is *iambic trimeter*? What is *iambic pentameter* called? What is *trochaic tetrameter*? Illustrate. What is *dactylic hexameter*? Illustrate. Mention some well-known poems written in this meter. What is *anapestic trimeter*? Illustrate. On what principle may a syllable be added to a foot or omitted from it?



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Explain the irregularities in the first two lines of Tennyson's "Break, break, break." What is said of metrical irregularities? What is their purpose? Illustrate from Wordsworth and Tennyson.

51. What is *rhyme*? Of what use is it? In what order may rhymes occur? Illustrate. What is a *double rhyme*? What other name has it? Illustrate. What is a *triple rhyme*? Illustrate. When is triple rhyme usually employed? What is *middle rhyme*? Illustrate. What is *sectional rhyme*? Illustrate. What is *alliteration*? What is said of it? Give illustrations from Mrs. Browning and Tennyson.

52. What is a stanza? What is a stanza of two lines called? of three? of four? Illustrate. Explain *rhyme royal*; *ottava rima*; Spenserian stanza. Illustrate. Explain the usual hymn meters, illustrating in each case.

53. What is blank verse? What is said of its freedom and difficulty? On what does its harmony depend? What is meant by *cæsure*? What is an "end-stopt" line? A "run-on" line? What French name is used for the latter? What is meant by *period*? Into what does the *period* practically divide blank verse? On what does Milton's "organ roll" depend? Point out a notable difference between Milton's and Shelley's blank verse.

54. What is meant by poetic style? What is said of poetic diction? Mention some poetic words. State some of the leading deviations in construction?

### ILLUSTRATIVE AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES

The following selections should be examined in the light of such questions as these:

Is it *poetry* or *verse*? What lifts it above prose? Does it treat of nature, man, or God? Is it intellectual, emotional, or both? What is the poet's idea? Is it commonplace, true, elevated, delicate, exquisite? What is the mood of the poet, —serious, playful, humorous, calm, exalted? What imaginative features has it? What concrete pictures? What figures? Is it self-restrained and classic? Is it loose and voluble?

As to structure, what is the fundamental foot? Name each line. What irregularities may exist and for what purpose? Is the movement slow or rapid? Explain the source of slowness or rapidity. What is the order of rhymes? Are they perfect or defective? Are there double, triple, middle, or sectional rhymes? Point out the alliteration. What is the effect? Name the stanza. Is it blank verse? Where does the

cæsural pause fall in each line? Is there variety? Are the lines "end-stopt" or "run-on"? Point out the poetic words. What is their effect? What poetic constructions are there? Divide the selections into three classes, —*feeble, good, excellent.*

Now all our neighbors' chimneys smoke,  
And Christmas blocks are burning;  
Their ovens they with baked meats choke,  
And all their spits are turning.  
Without the door let sorrow lie;  
And if for cold it hap to die,  
We'll bury it in a Christmas pie,  
And evermore be merry. — WITHER.

Silence in love betrays more woe  
Than words, though ne'er so witty;  
A beggar that is dumb, you know,  
May challenge double pity.

Then wrong not, dearest to my heart,  
My true, though secret passion;  
He smarteth most that hides his smart,  
And sues for no compassion. — RALEIGH.

Father, thy hand  
Hath reared these venerable columns, thou  
Didst weave this verdant roof. Thou didst look down  
Upon the naked earth, and forthwith rose  
All these fair ranks of trees. They, in thy sun,  
Budded and shook their green leaves in thy breeze,  
And shot toward heaven. The century-living crow  
Whose birth was in their tops, grew old and died  
Among their branches, till at last they stood,  
As now they stand, mossy, and tall, and dark,  
Fit shrine for humble worshipper to hold  
Communion with his Maker. — BRYANT.

But since, O man! thy life and health demand  
Not food alone, but labor from thy hand,  
First, in the field, beneath the sun's strong rays,  
Ask of thy mother Earth the needful maize;  
She loves the race that courts her yielding soil,  
And gives her bounties to the sons of toil. — BARLOW.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

My days among the dead are passed;  
Around me I behold,  
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,  
The mighty minds of old;  
My never-failing friends are they,  
With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal,  
And seek relief in woe;  
And while I understand and feel  
How much to them I owe,  
My cheeks have often been bedewed  
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.—SOUTHEY.

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;  
The holy time is quiet as a nun  
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun  
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;  
The gentleness of heaven is on the sea;  
Listen! the mighty being is awake,  
And doth with his eternal motion make  
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.  
WORDSWORTH.

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait.—LONGFELLOW.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,  
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,  
Each in his narrow cell forever laid,  
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,  
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,  
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,  
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
Or busy housewife ply her evening care;

No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share. — GRAY.

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:  
"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.  
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?  
I have lived my life, and that which I have done,  
May He within himself make pure! but thou,  
If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

TENNYSON.

All day thy wings have fanned  
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,  
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,  
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;  
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,  
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,  
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest. — BRYANT.

Then from a neighboring thicket the mocking-bird, wildest of  
singers,  
Swinging aloft on a willowy spray that hung o'er the water,



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Shook from his little throat such floods of delirious music,  
That the whole air and the woods and the waves seemed silent  
to listen.

Plaintive at first were the tones, and sad; then soaring to  
madness

Seemed they to follow or guide the revel of frenzied  
Bacchantes.

Single notes were then heard, in sorrowful, low lamentation;  
Till, having gathered them all, he flung them abroad in  
derision,

As when, after a storm, a gust of wind through the tree-tops  
Shakes down the rattling rain in a crystal shower on the  
branches.

LONGFELLOW.

Over his keys the musing organist,  
Beginning doubtfully and far away,  
First lets his fingers wander as they list,  
And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay;  
Then, as the touch of his loved instrument  
Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws his theme,  
First guessed by faint auroral flushes sent  
Along the wavering vista of his dream.—LOWELL.

And when I am stretched beneath the pines,  
Where the evening star so holy shines,  
I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,  
At the sophist schools, and the learned clan;  
For what are they all, in their high conceit,  
When man in the bush with God may meet?—EMERSON.

'Twas twilight and the sunless day went down  
Over the waste of waters; like a veil  
Which, if withdrawn, would but disclose the frown  
Of one whose hate is masked but to assail.  
Thus to their hopeless eyes the night was shown,  
And grimly darkled o'er the faces pale,  
And the dim desolate deep: twelve days had Fear  
Been their familiar, and now Death was here.—BYRON.

And oft the craggy cliff he loved to climb,  
When all in mist the world below was lost—  
What dreadful pleasure! there to stand sublime,

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Like shipwrecked mariner on desert coast,  
And view the enormous waste of vapor, tossed  
In billows, lengthening to the horizon round,  
Now scooped in gulfs, with mountains now embossed,  
And hear the voice of mirth and song rebound,  
Flocks, herds, and waterfalls, along the hoar profound!

BEATTIE.

### NOTE

In addition to the foregoing poetical selections, those previously given may be analyzed with reference to form, content, and mood. Their beauty or excellence will now be more clearly understood. Furthermore, it is recommended that the teacher assign brief poems, either from our standard authors or from current literature, for full analysis and criticism. The blank verse of Tennyson, Shelley, Milton, and Shakespeare might be investigated and compared at considerable length in order to determine the average length of their sentences, the place of the cæsural pause, and the proportion of "end-stopt" or "run-on" lines.

CHAPTER VIII

KINDS OF POETRY

55. *Classification.* Poetry may be divided into four general types or classes: (1) *didactic* poetry, which is chiefly concerned with instruction; (2) *lyric* poetry, which generally gives expression to some emotion; (3) *epic* poetry, which is devoted principally to narration; and (4) *dramatic* poetry, which deals with direct representation. All these types or classes have variations and subdivisions, which call for consideration in some detail.

56. *Didactic Poetry.* The term "didactic" as applied to poetry involves a seeming contradiction. Instruction is a function peculiar to prose; but in the hands of a genuine poet, didactic verse may be so adorned by the imagination and so warmed by the feelings as to lift it sometimes into the realm of genuine poetry. Thus Dryden's *Religio Laici*, the first didactic poem of special note in our language, is essentially prosaic in theme and purpose. But its opening lines, by a happy simile, are unmistakably poetic:

"Dim as the borrowed beams of moon and stars  
To lonely, weary, wandering travellers,  
Is Reason to the soul; and as on high  
Those rolling fires discover but the sky,  
Not light us here, so Reason's glimmering ray  
Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,  
But guide us upward to a better day."

A didactic poem, at its best, is apt to be more or less prosaic. In estimating its worth, three points are principally to be considered: (1) To what extent has it a true poetic quality? (2) To what extent is it complete, symmetrical, and true? and (3) To what extent is it correct and skillful in versification?

Our language is specially rich in didactic poems, among which may be mentioned Dryden's *Religio Laici* and "Hind and Panther," Pope's "Essay on Criticism" and "Essay on Man," Young's "Night Thoughts," Johnson's "Vanity of Human Wishes," Cowper's "Task," Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination," Rogers's "Pleasures of Memory," Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope," Wordsworth's "Excursion," and Pollok's "Course of Time."

(1) *Satire* is a species of didactic poetry. It is the use of wit, irony, and sarcasm to ridicule foibles, vices, or evils of any kind. Three kinds of satire may be distinguished: *personal* satire, which is directed against individuals, and usually springs from malignant or unworthy motives; *partisan* satire, which aims to make an opposing party or sect odious; and *social* satire, which seeks to improve the manners or morals of society. Dryden, himself a master of the dangerous art, says, —

“Satire has always shone among the rest,  
And is the boldest way, if not the best,  
To tell men freely of their faintest faults,  
To laugh at their vain deeds and vainer thoughts.”

The mood of satire may be various: it may be genial and pleasant; it may be earnest and just; or it may be personal, unjust, and malicious. Any species of satire may exhibit keenness of wit, but satire reaches its highest excellence only when it springs from upright motives and confines itself to truth. If there is exaggeration or caricature, as is generally the case, there still must be a substantial basis of fact. No amount of intellectual brilliancy or artistic skill can justify what is false and slanderous.

Satirical poetry is very old. Aristophanes, Juvenal, Horace were distinguished satirists of antiquity. Satire is found in almost every period of English literature. Among our well-known satires are Butler's "Hudibras," Dryden's "Mac Flecknoe" and "Absalom and Achitophel," Pope's "Dunciad," Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" and "Waltz," Lowell's "Fables for Critics," Moore's "Fudge Family in Paris," and not a few others.

(2) *Descriptive poetry*, or the *nature epic*, as it has been called, may be classed under didactic poetry. It is devoted to the description not of successive events but of successive scenes in nature. It is sober and reflective in character. Beginning with Chaucer, who delights in May time and the daisies, nature occupies a prominent place and displays an ever-unfolding richness in English poetry. Pope's "Windsor Forest" is an elaborate though artificial piece of description. Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" are nature pictures that have never been surpassed in their graphic portraiture. Other celebrated descriptive poems are Goldsmith's "Traveller" and "Deserted Village," Thomson's "Seasons," Bryant's "Forest Hymn," Whittier's "Snow-Bound." But in poems of every class there are



descriptions of nature, though occupying an incidental and secondary position.

In these nature poems there should be truthfulness of description. They should be genuine; not coldly conventional, as Pope's "Windsor Forest, " but real or idealized pictures from nature. The descriptions should be specific rather than general; and if, in addition to faithful portraiture, we have the warmth and elevation that come from human emotion or from the recognition of an all-pervading Presence, the result is the highest type of descriptive poetry. These finer descriptions of nature are found in all the great poets since the days of Wordsworth.

(3) *Pastoral poetry* is a species of descriptive poetry. It is devoted to a portrayal of country life and manners, and generally embodies a slight degree of dramatic action. "A pastoral, " says Alexander Pope, "is an imitation of the action of a shepherd, or one considered under that character. The form of this imitation is dramatic or narrative, or mixed of both; the fable simple, the manners not too polite nor too rustic; the thoughts are plain, yet admit a little quickness and passion, but that short and flowing; the expression humble, yet as pure as the language will afford; neat but not florid; easy and yet lively. "

English literature is not rich in pastoral poetry. What we have is generally an imitation or translation of classical models. One of the best known English pastorals is Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar, " which contains imitations of Theocritus and Marot. Milton's "Comus" is a kind of pastoral. The purest examples of pastoral poetry are found in Pope, who has a series which he calls "Pastorals. " Keats's "Endymion" has been classed with pastoral poetry, but it is not a pure example of the type.

57. *Lyric Poetry.* Lyric poetry gives intense expression to thought and emotion. As the name indicates, it was originally accompanied by music. Though lyric poems are short, they constitute, in the aggregate, a large part of English poetry. At the present day didactic and epic poetry is rarely written; but lyric poetry continues to flourish. Its range of theme is practically without limits.

There are numerous kinds or classes of lyric poetry, of which we may distinguish the following: (1) ballads, (2) songs, (3) odes, (4) elegies, (5) sonnets. These will now be considered in the order given.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

(1) A *ballad* is a brief narrative poem in lyric form. The ballad was originally the production of wandering minstrels, and in its old English form it possessed a simplicity, directness, and charming crudeness that a more cultivated age cannot successfully imitate. The old English ballads, most of which were composed in the north of England, depict the lawlessness, daring, fortitude, and passion characteristic of life along the Scottish border. A group of ballads gathers about the name of Robin Hood, "the gentlest thief," as Scott calls him, "that ever was." A stanza or two will illustrate their general tone and style:

"He that hath neither beene kith nor kin  
Might have seen a full fayre sight,  
To see how together these yeomen went  
With blades both brown and bright.

"To see how these yeomen together they fought  
Two hours of a summer's day,  
Yet neither Robin Hood nor Sir Guy  
Them fettled to flye away."

Recent poets have written ballads, among the best of which may be mentioned Longfellow's "Skeleton in Armor" and "Wreck of the Hesperus," Tennyson's "Edward Gray" and "Lady Clare," and Goldsmith's "Hermit." These are all ballads of a pure type.

(2) A *song* is a lyric poem intended to be sung. Songs may be classified according to sentiment or occasion. In this way we may distinguish love songs, convivial or drinking songs, political songs, war songs, national songs, religious songs or hymns. As with lyric poems in general, there is no thought or sentiment of the human soul that may not find expression in song. Burns is distinguished as one of the best of all song writers. Moore's "Irish Melodies" and "National Airs" are bright though somewhat artificial. Among the writings of nearly all our poets are pieces suitable for music.

Our hymns do not as a rule reach a high degree of poetic excellence. The reason is, perhaps, not difficult to find. The hymn writers are concerned less with a free play of the imagination and emotions than with a strict regard to theological or even dogmatic truth. But notwithstanding the difficulties of the case, not a few hymn writers have given beautiful expression to their faith, adoration, and love.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Keble, Watts, Wesley, Cowper, Bonar, and many others have written hymns that give satisfying expression to a deep religious fervor.

(3) The *ode*, is a somewhat lengthy lyric, characterized by exalted feeling, dignity of theme, and irregular and complicated structure. Our literature contains a number of excellent and famous odes, among which may be mentioned Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," which the confident author thought would never be surpassed.

"'Twas at the royal feast, for Persia won  
By Philip's warlike son:  
Aloft in awful state  
The godlike hero sate  
On his imperial throne;  
His valiant peers were placed around,  
Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound;  
(So should desert in arms be crowned).  
The lovely Thais, by his side,  
Sate like a blooming Eastern bride,  
In flower of youth and beauty's pride.  
Happy, happy, happy pair!  
None but the brave,  
None but the brave,  
None but the brave deserve the fair."

Pope's "Ode on Saint Cecilia's Day" is scarcely inferior. Collins's "Ode on the Passions" is well known, though not equal perhaps to his "Ode to Evening." Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" and "Progress of Poesy" are deserving of mention. Shelley wrote an "Ode to Liberty" and an "Ode to the West Wind," both well worth reading and study. Coleridge's "Ode on France" deservedly ranks high, and Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty" and "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" are almost unsurpassed. Lowell's "Commemoration Ode" is justly admired.

(4) The *elegy* is a meditative poem of sorrowful theme, usually lamenting the dead. English literature may boast of several elegies unsurpassed in any age or country. Spenser's "Astrophel" is a lament over the death of Sir Philip Sidney. Milton's "Lycidas" is a monody on the death of the poet's friend, Edward King. Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" is celebrated for its graphic description and beautiful thought. Shelley's "Adonais," a lament for Keats, belongs to the upper regions of song; and Tennyson's "In

Memoriam" belongs to the great poetic achievements of the nineteenth century.

(5) The *sonnet* is a lyric poem consisting of fourteen iambic pentameter lines. It is divided into two parts: the first consisting of an *octave* or double quatrain, and the other of a *sestet*. The rhymes of the first two quatrains are usually the same; those of the sestet are variously arranged. The sonnet is an artificial and complicated poetic form; but it lends itself admirably to the development of a single poetic thought, and Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Mrs. Browning, Longfellow, Hayne, and many others have used it with great skill and power. The following sonnet by Mrs. Browning will serve for illustration:

"I thought once how Theocritus had sung  
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,  
Who each one in a gracious hand appears  
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young;  
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,  
I saw in gradual vision through my tears,  
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,  
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung  
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,  
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move  
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair,  
And a voice said in mastery while I strove,  
'Guess now who holds thee?' 'Death,' I said. But, there,  
The silver answer rang, 'Not Death but Love!'"

As will be seen on examination, the rhyme scheme is as follows: *a b b a a b b a c d c d c d*. But the quatrains may have alternate rhymes, and the sestet may consist of a quatrain and couplet or of interwoven triplets, as in the following schemes: *a b a b a b a b c d c d e e*; *a b b a a b b a c d e c d e*.

58. *Some Criteria.* The brief lyric, above all other kinds of poetry, should be finished in form and expression. The imperfections of diction that might go unchallenged in a longer poem are inexcusable in a lyric. Delicacy of thought and intensity of feeling constitute its breath of life, and should mold for themselves a beauteous form. What is commonplace, harsh, or unmusical in expression should be avoided, unless such diction is wedded to the thought. Concrete and suggestive words are to be used rather than abstract and vague



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

expressions. There is always a distinct gain when the poem evokes pleasing pictures.

As a rule the thought and expression should be clear; the poet should not mystify the reader nor tax too far his efforts at comprehension. Browning sometimes grievously offends in this particular. While insisting on clearness, however, we should not forget that the mystical and the musical have their place in poetry. A poem may sometimes be pleasing through its melodious and mystical character, even when it is not clearly intelligible.

Whether the poet has a distinct introduction, or whether he plunges into the midst of his theme, he should observe method and symmetry of structure; and in spite of the liveliest play of the imagination and sensibilities, he should impose a severe restraint upon himself. He should leave something to the imagination of the reader.

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

55. Into how many classes is poetry divided? Name them, giving the general character of each class. 56. What contradiction is there in the term *didactic poetry*? How is it saved from this contradiction? Illustrate. What points are to be considered in estimating didactic poetry? Mention some principal didactic poems.

What is poetic *satire*? What three species are mentioned? What is said of the mood of satire? Mention some well-known satires. What is meant by *descriptive poetry*? What is said of nature in poetry? Mention some descriptive pieces, or nature epics. What are their criteria? What is *pastoral poetry*? What was Pope's conception of it? What is its place in English literature? Mention our principal pastorals.

57. What is *lyric poetry*? Mention the principal kinds. What is a *ballad*? What is said of old English ballads? Mention some recent ballads. What is a *song*? Name the different kinds. Who are mentioned as song writers? What is said of hymns? Why are they not better? Name some prominent hymn writers? What is an *ode*? What place does it hold in our literature? Name a few famous odes. What is an *elegy*? Mention some famous elegies. What is a *sonnet*? How is it divided? What is the rhyme scheme of the sonnet? Name some of

our great sonneteers. 58. What are some of the criteria for judging lyric poetry? What was one of Browning's faults?

### ILLUSTRATIVE AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES

The following selections should be studied in the light of such questions as these:

To what division of poetry does it belong? Is it didactic, descriptive, pastoral, satirical? What is the spirit of the piece? Is it a ballad, song, hymn, ode, elegy, sonnet? Is it elevated and intense? Is it true in sentiment and thought? Is it well constructed and harmonious? Is it clear or hazy? Is it natural or affected? What is its meter?

Of all the causes which conspire to blind  
Man's erring judgment, and misguide the mind,  
What the weak head with strongest bias rules,  
Is pride, the never-failing vice of fools.  
Whatever nature has in worth denied,  
She gives in large recruits of needful pride;  
For as in bodies, thus in souls, we find  
What wants in blood and spirits, swelled with wind:  
Pride, where wit fails, steps in to our defence,  
And fills up all the mighty void of sense.—POPE.

Of these the false Achitophel was first,  
A name to all succeeding ages cursed:  
For close designs, and crooked counsels fit;  
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit;  
Restless, unfixed in principles and place;  
In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace:  
A fiery soul, which, working out its way,  
Fretted the pigmy-body to decay;  
A daring pilot in extremity;  
Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,  
He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,  
Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.

DRYDEN.

Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,  
And pause awhile from letters to be wise;  
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,  
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.

See nations, slowly wise, and meanly just,  
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.  
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,  
Hear Lydiat's life and Galileo's end. — JOHNSON.

The groves of Eden, vanished now so long,  
Live in description, and look green in song;  
These, were my breast inspired with equal flame,  
Like them in beauty, should be like in fame.  
Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,  
Here earth and water seem to strive again;  
Not chaos-like together crushed and bruised,  
But, as the world, harmoniously confused:  
Where order in variety we see,  
And where, though all things differ, all agree.  
Here waving groves a chequered scene display,  
And part admit, and part exclude the day;  
As some coy nymph her lover's warm address  
Nor quite indulges, nor can quite repress. — POPE.

Right against the eastern gate,  
Where the great sun begins his state,  
Robed in flames, and amber light,  
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;  
While the plowman, near at hand,  
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his sithe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the vale. — MILTON.

In this, our happy and "progressive" age,  
When all alike ambitious cares engage;  
When beardless boys to sudden sages grow,  
And "Miss" her nurse abandons for a beau;  
When for their dogmas Non-Resistants fight,  
When dunces lecture, and when dandies write;  
When spinsters, trembling for the nation's fate,  
Neglect their stockings to preserve the state;  
When critic wits their brazen lustre shed  
On golden authors whom they never read;  
With parrot praise of "Roman grandeur" speak,  
And in bad English eulogize the Greek;—

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

When facts like these no reprehension bring,  
May not, uncensured, an Attorney sing?—SAX

In the street I heard a thumping; and I knew it was the  
stumping  
Of the Corporal, our old neighbor, on that wooden leg he wore,  
With a knot of women round him,—it was lucky I had found him,  
So I followed with the others, and the Corporal marched  
before.

They were making for the steeple,—the old soldier and his  
people;  
The pigeons circled round us as we climbed the creaking stair;  
Just across the narrow river—O, so close it made me shiver!—  
Stood a fortress on the hill-top that but yesterday was bare.  
HOLMES.

Jenny kissed me when we met,  
Jumping from the chair she sat in.  
Time, you thief! who love to get  
Sweets into your list, put that in.  
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad;  
Say that health and wealth have missed me:  
Say I'm growing old, but add—  
Jenny kissed me.—LEIGH HUNT.

Those evening bells! those evening bells!  
How many a tale their music tells,  
Of youth, and home, and that sweet time  
When last I heard their soothing chime!

Those joyous hours are passed away;  
And many a heart that then was gay,  
Within the tomb now darkly dwells,  
And hears no more those evening bells.—MOORE.

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—  
Turn wheresoe'er I may,



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

WORDSWORTH.

Abide with me! fast falls the even-tide;  
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!  
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;  
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away;  
Change and decay in all around I see;  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!—LYTE.

When I consider how my light is spent  
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,  
And that one talent which is death to hide,  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest he returning chide;  
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"  
I fondly ask; but Patience, to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need  
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best  
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state  
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
They also serve who only stand and wait."—MILTON.

### NOTE

In addition to these selections the student might classify, as far as possible, the poetical extracts previously given. In some cases, owing to brevity, this classification will be difficult. Furthermore, the teacher might assign particular didactic, descriptive, satirical, or lyric poems for special study as to form, content, and mood. The special criteria of this chapter should be applied. A comparative study of Pope's "Windsor Forest," Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," and Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" would be specially instructive, as showing the different ways of treating nature.

## CHAPTER IX

### EPIC AND DRAMATIC POETRY

59. *The Epic.* The *epic* is a long poem celebrating in stately verse some important and heroic event of the past. It may be based either on history or tradition, though in our greatest epics there is a commingling of the two. The method of the epic is chiefly narrative and descriptive. The theme is generally stated in the beginning, and the narrative, frequently interspersed with episodes, pursues an even course. Homer thus begins the "*Iliad*":

"Of Peleus' son Achilles, sing, O Muse,  
The direful wrath, which sorrows numberless  
Brought on the Greeks, and many mighty souls  
Of youthful heroes, slain untimely, sent  
To Pluto's dark abode, their bodies left  
A prey to dogs and all the fowls of heaven."

Vergil begins the "*Æneid*" in a similar manner, and the opening lines of "*Paradise Lost*" follow classic models.

The structure of the epic may be determined from the fundamental conception of its nature. As a narrative of an important and heroic event, it should be simple, direct, and dignified in its treatment. The incidents should be introduced in a natural order, and their prominence should be regulated according to their relative importance. In an epic poem, as in every other creation of art, the law of symmetry should be observed.

But the epic admits of episode. The poet may stop the flow of his narrative for a time to dwell upon some incident connected with or growing out of the main theme. Such an episode is the story of the destruction of Troy in the second and third books of the "*Æneid*." The episode may be employed to throw light on existing conditions or to add interest to the general narrative. In the "*Æneid*" it serves both purposes to an eminent degree.

The epic makes extensive use of dialogue, and thus, in a measure, partakes of the nature of the drama. The introduction of the dialogue serves a double purpose: first, it lends greater vividness to the narrative; and second, it lends variety to the story, enabling the

ancient minstrel, and in a less degree the modern reader, to do a little acting. Often the dialogue is highly dramatic, as in the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon in the first book of the "Iliad." "A large part of our greatest epics is in dialogue.

The great epics of the world are all heroic. They celebrate great events—the Trojan war, the founding of Rome, the loss of Paradise—and bring before us a large number of heroes, divinities, and angels. The "Iliad" is made up chiefly of battle scenes, in which mighty heroes and Olympian deities take part. Æneas is the hero of the "Æneid"; but back of the tribulations through which he passes, we recognize the agency of contending divinities. And in "Paradise Lost" Milton introduces the mighty beings of heaven and hell. The epic is thus the stateliest and grandest form of poetry.

There are minor varieties of the epic, which occupy an important place in modern poetry.

(1) The principal of these varieties is the *metrical romance*, of which Scott's "The Lady of the Lake" or Owen Meredith's "Lucile" may be taken as the type. It differs from the grand or heroic epic in confining itself to lowlier themes, and in introducing the passion of love. The metrical romance lends itself readily to every form of romantic story. In Scott it introduces the scenes and characters of mediæval Scotland. Byron, in "The Giaour, " "The Siege of Corinth, " "The Bride of Abydos, " and others, works up oriental legends. Moore's "Lalla Rookh" is a beautiful oriental romance. Owen Meredith's "Lucile" is a modern love story, while Morris's "Story of Sigurd" is derived from Scandinavian legends.

(2) The *metrical tale* may be distinguished from the metrical romance by the absence of romantic love and adventure. It is naturally briefer in form. Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon" and Burns's "Tam O'Shanter" may be taken as types of the metrical tale. On the one side it approaches the metrical romance, and on the other the lyrical ballad. Since the days of Gower and Chaucer the metrical tale has added to English poetry some of its choicest pieces.

(3) The *mock epic* is, as the name suggests, a burlesque. It narrates trivial incidents in a stately manner. It is not to be taken seriously, and may be employed either to satirize or to amuse. Butler's "Hudibras" is a mock heroic satire, while Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" was intended to amuse with its pleasant conceits and to effect

a reconciliation between two alienated families among the nobility. Here are the opening lines of Canto III:

"Close by those meads, forever crowned with flowers,  
Where Thames with pride surveys his rising towers,  
There stands a structure of majestic frame,  
Which from the neighboring Hampton takes its name.  
Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom  
Of foreign tyrants, and of nymphs at home;  
Here thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey,  
Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea."

60. *The Drama.* The drama is a composition in prose or verse usually intended to be acted on the stage. Representation takes the place of narration. In order to add to the reality and interest of the representation, the accessories of dress and scenery are carefully employed. Whether in prose or verse, the laws of dramatic structure are the same.

The two principal divisions of the drama are *tragedy* and *comedy*. Tragedy represents an important and serious action, which usually has a fatal termination; it appeals to the earnest side of our nature, and moves our deepest feelings.

Comedy consists in a representation of light and amusing incidents; it exhibits the foibles of individuals, the manners of society, and the humorous phases of life. The name *tragi-comedy* is applied to a drama in which tragic and comic scenes are intermingled. A *farce* is a short comedy distinguished by its slight thought and ridiculous caricature or extravagance. A *melodrama* is a drama with a romantic story or plot, and sensational situations and incidents. An *opera* is a musical drama, the higher forms of which are known as *grand opera*, and the lower or farcical forms as *opera bouffe*.

The laws of the drama are substantially the same for all forms. There should be unity of dramatic action; that is, the separate scenes and incidents should contribute in some way to the development of the plot and to the final result or *dénouement*. A collection of disconnected scenes, no matter how interesting in themselves, would not make a drama.

In addition to unity of action, which is obviously the one indispensable law of the drama, two other unities were prescribed



by ancient authorities. The one is unity of time, which requires that the action fall within the limits of a single day; the other is unity of place, which requires that the action occur in the same locality. While evidently artificial and dispensable, these latter unities conduce to clear and concise treatment. Among the Greeks and Romans the three unities, as they are called, were strictly observed; they have been followed also by the older French drama; but the English stage, breaking away in the days of Elizabeth from every artificial restriction, recognizes unity of action alone.

The action of the drama should exhibit movement or progress, in which several stages may be clearly marked. The *introduction* acquaints us, more or less fully, with the subject to be treated. It usually brings before us some of the leading characters, and shows us the circumstances in which they are placed. After the introduction follows the *growth* or *development* of the action toward the climax. From the days of Aristotle this part of the drama has been called "the tying of the knot," and it needs to be managed with great care. If the development is too slow, the interest lags; if too rapid, the climax appears tame.

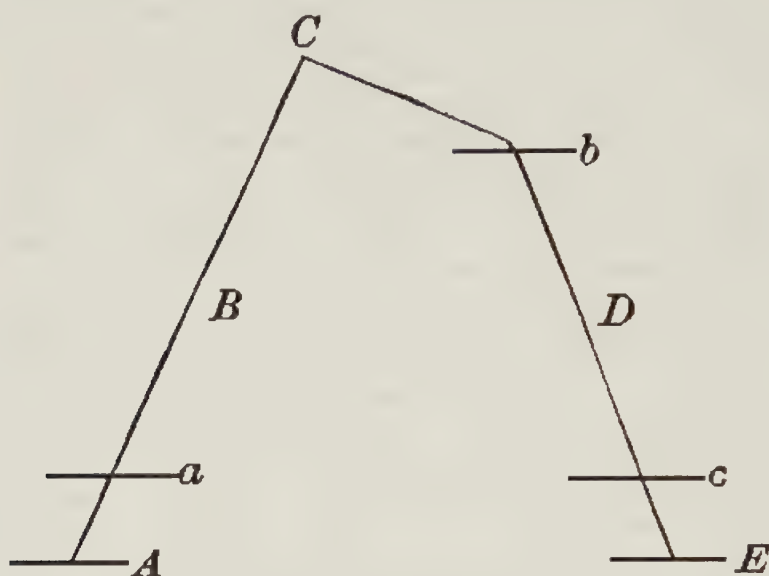
The interest of a drama depends in a large measure upon the successful arrangement of the *climax*, or the point in which the opposing forces immediately confront each other. In our best dramas it usually occurs near the middle of the piece. From this point the action proceeds to the close or *dénouement*. The knot is untied; the complications in which the leading characters have become involved are either happily removed or lead to the inevitable catastrophe. Avoiding every digression, the action should go forward rapidly, in order not to weary the patience and dissipate the interest of the spectator. The *dénouement* should not be dependent upon some foreign element introduced at the last moment, but should spring naturally from the antecedent action.

In addition to the five principal parts just indicated—introduction, rise or tying of the knot, climax, fall or untying of the knot, and *dénouement*—there are three other elements or factors that need to be pointed out. The first is the cause or exciting impulse of the dramatic action, and naturally stands between the introduction and the rise or tying of the knot. The second is the cause or tragic impulse of the counteraction, and stands between the climax and the fall or untying of the knot. The third is the cause or impulse that sometimes holds

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

the action in check for a moment before reaching its final issue, and stands between the fall and the *dénouement*.

The structure and eight component parts of a complete or ideal drama may be represented in a diagram as follows.



A = Introduction.

B = Rise or tying of knot.

C = Climax.

D = Fall or untying of knot.

E = *Dénouement*.

a = Cause or exciting impulse.

b = Tragic impulse.

c = Impulse of last suspense.

61. *Characters and Manners.* Apart from the plot or story the interest of a drama depends to a large extent on the *dramatis personae*. In the classic drama the characters are few and dignified; in the romantic drama, as first developed in the age of Shakespeare, the characters are numerous and drawn from every class of society. The same difference is found in the classic school of France, represented by Corneille, Molière, and Racine, and the romantic school founded by Victor Hugo.

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

The characters should be clearly drawn and sufficiently differentiated. Each one should have his peculiar individuality, and be reasonably consistent with himself in all parts of the dramatic action. The whole world of mankind is at the service of the dramatist, and there is no type of humanity that may not be brought upon the stage. The ancient world of history or of tradition may be represented, or the stage may hold up the mirror to contemporary manners and society.

The drama should be true to the time and locality in which the action is placed. The dress and manners should be in keeping with the conditions assumed, and the tone of thought and expression should not do violence to time or place. A Carthaginian nobleman, for example, should not ascertain the time of day by means of a gold watch, nor should an unlettered rustic speak in strains of eloquent poetry. A violation of the truth in time is called an *anachronism*. But "in some dramas, and in some species of drama, " as Ward has said, "time and place are so purely imaginary and so much a matter of indifference that the adoption of a purely conventional standard of manners, or at least the exclusion of any definitely fixed one, is here desirable. " This is shown in Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream. "

The drama should be moral both in tone and teaching. We may apply to the drama, as to every other species of composition, Pope's well-known couplet:

"Immodest words admit of no defense,  
For want of decency is a want of sense."

Indecent language and grossly immoral situations should be excluded from the stage. When this is not done, as is frequently the case, the drama, instead of uplifting, degrades humanity. This fact has brought the stage into disrepute with many excellent people. In its close or *dénouement* the drama should not let vice triumph over virtue, nor should it make the impression that wickedness ever escapes unpunished. Such teaching places the stage in contravention with the moral order of the world, according to which, even when the punitive consequences are not openly manifest, wickedness is inevitably accompanied with some form of internal or external retribution.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is an epic? On what may it be based? What is the method of the epic? Where is the theme stated? Illustrate. What should be the structure of the epic? What is meant by symmetry? What is an episode? Why may it be introduced? Illustrate. What is said of the use of dialogue? What is the nature of the great epic? What is meant by *heroic* here? Illustrate. What is a metrical romance? How does it differ from the grand epic? What is said of the adaptability of the metrical romance? Illustrate. What is a metrical tale? Name an example or two. What is a mock epic? For what ends may it be used? Mention a mock epic.

2. What is a drama? What is said of the laws of the drama? Name the two chief divisions. Define tragedy; comedy. What is tragi-comedy? farce? melodrama? opera? What is the difference between *grand opera* and *opera bouffe*? What is meant by unity of action? What other two unities are there? What is meant by unity of time? What is meant by unity of place? Where are the three unities strictly observed? Which is observed on the English stage? Mention the successive steps of dramatic action. What is the function of the *introduction*? What follows the introduction? What name did Aristotle give it? What is the *climax*? What is said about the arrangement of the climax? What is the fall or untying of the knot? Why should it not be protracted? What is meant by the *dénouement*? What are the three other dramatic elements? What is meant by the *cause* or *exciting impulse*? What is meant by the *tragic impulse*? By the *impulse of last suspense*?

3. On what does the interest largely depend? What is the difference in the characters of the classic and the romantic drama? What is said of each character? Whence may the drama draw its characters? Where may the dramatist get his materials? To what should the drama be true? What is an *anachronism*? Illustrate. Is conformity to time and place always to be adhered to? What is said of the moral tone of the drama? What is Pope's opinion? In what two ways should the stage be moral?

## NOTE

In place of the illustrative and practical exercises, as heretofore given, it is recommended that the student be referred to representative epic and dramatic productions. Besides the great epics mentioned in the text, some of the following works might be used:



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Scott's "The Lady of the Lake" or "Marmion," Tennyson's "Elaine" or "Enoch Arden," Dryden's "Palamon and Arcite," Byron's "Bride of Abydos" and "Prisoner of Chillon," Burns's "Tam O'Shanter," Pope's "Rape of the Lock," Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer," Sheridan's "Rivals," and Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice," "Julius Cæsar," and "Hamlet." To show the difference between the classic and the Shakespearian drama the student should read one or more of the plays of Euripides, Corneille, and Molière in good translations. Victor Hugo's "Ruy Blas" is recommended as an excellent type of the romantic drama of the nineteenth century.

Apart from the criticism of diction, sentence, and figure, the pieces assigned should be studied with the view of answering such questions as the following: To what division of the epic or drama does the work belong? What is its source? Is it legend or history? What is the story? Has it a beginning, middle, and end? Is it symmetrical in structure? What episodes are introduced? Is the treatment in keeping with the subject? Is it true to fact and character? Does it faithfully portray an age or country? What customs are reflected? What is the state of society? Describe the leading characters. What is the rank of the piece? What other productions resemble it? Is it classic or romantic? Are there autobiographic elements? What light is thrown on the author? How is nature treated? What fundamental views of life are reflected? What is the moving impulse in the drama? What constitutes the introduction? Where is the climax? Is the *dénouement* natural and satisfactory? Trace the tying and the untying of the knot. What furnishes the "tragic impulse"? Is there an "impulse of last suspense"? What unities are observed? What is the length of time consumed? What is the ethical teaching of the piece?

CHAPTER X

NATURE AND FORMS OF PROSE

62. *Definition.* Prose is the ordinary form of discourse. It is distinguished from poetry not only by more commonplace thought but also by the absence of regular metrical structure. Prose and poetry together constitute the great body of literature; but at the present time, which is characterized by the predominance of material and commercial interests, prose forms by far the larger part. In our popular magazines, poetry is relegated to a very subordinate place.

The forms of prose are various. They may be approximately classified under history, essays, oratory, fiction, science, philosophy, and epistolary correspondence. These classes, as will be seen later, are subject to numerous subdivisions. The last three classes—science, philosophy, and epistolary correspondence—do not come within the scope of the present work, but in general it may be said that they are subject to the same laws of truth and beauty that govern other forms of literary composition.

63. *History.* History is a systematic record of past events. It rests upon contemporary testimony, which may exist in the form of written documents or of oral tradition. History passes into mythology when it treats of legendary heroes and divinities, and into fiction when it treats of imaginary events. Metrical chronicles, however valuable may be the historical materials they contain, are not to be regarded as history in the true sense of the word. History presupposes change, which may take the form of progress or decadence. Without the element of change, there is nothing to relate beyond the existing state of things. English literature is very rich in historical writing of every kind, and in the century that has just passed, we meet in England with the names of Macaulay, Carlyle, and Froude, and in America with the names of Bancroft, Prescott, and Motley.

As to time, history has a well-defined and generally accepted division. This division recognizes three great periods, —namely, *ancient*, *mediæval*, and *modern*. In each of these periods a general type of social condition, varying somewhat in different countries, prevailed without essential change. Ancient history extends from the beginning of trustworthy records to the fall of the Roman empire in

A. D. 476; mediæval history extends from that date to the revival of learning and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in 1517; and modern history embraces the period extending from that time down to the present.

As to subject-matter, history has been variously divided. When it treats of human progress in all nations and ages it is called *general* or *universal* history. When it deals with a single country it becomes *national* history; thus we have histories of England and of the United States. When it treats of separate institutions or interests it may be regarded as *special* history, —as church history or a history of literature. Again, history may be divided according to the sources from which it derives its data. When based on the facts supplied in the Scriptures it is known as *sacred* history; when based on other sources of information it is called *profane* or *secular* history. This, however, is only an arbitrary though convenient distinction; for all history, as a record of the unfolding purposes of God, is sacred.

As to form, history is divided into several classes. A *chronicle* is a register of facts and events in the order of time in which they occurred. It does not enter into a discussion either of causes or effects. It is rather a source of historical materials than history itself. The "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," for example, contains valuable facts, but can hardly be regarded as a history of the Anglo-Saxons. *Annals* are chronicles that give the events year by year.

As to method, history may be divided into *narrative*, *descriptive*, and *philosophical*. Each has its definite object, by which its treatment of materials is determined. *Narrative* history is chiefly concerned with a systematic presentation of the facts. It is satisfied when these are clearly presented in due perspective, and afford a comprehensive survey of the period or subject treated of. Nearly all the manuals of history in common use belong to this class.

*Descriptive* history aims at presenting a graphic portraiture of the past. Its method is not so much narration as description. Men and events are brought forward in vivid colors. It makes the past live again before our eyes like a moving pageant; and better to accomplish this result, perspective, and even a full statement of events, are sometimes sacrificed. While narrative history is concerned mostly with the succession of important public events, — wars, changes of administration, and far-reaching legislative enactments, —descriptive or scenic history introduces, in large

measure, the social life and manners. Macaulay is a prince among descriptive historians, though no better example of scenic history can be found than Carlyle's "French Revolution. "

Philosophic history is concerned less with narration and description than with the underlying causes and effects of events. It regards all human events as an outward movement or evolution, which proceeds according to fixed and ascertainable laws. It looks upon history, to use the words of Macaulay, as "philosophy teaching by example. " Philosophic history is a product of recent times; and among the best examples are Hegel's "Philosophy of History, " Guizot's "History of Civilization, " and Lecky's "History of European Morals. "

It is evident that an ideal history will be a combination of the narrative, descriptive, and philosophic. The first gives the events in due order and proportion; the second clothes them in living reality; and the third explains their causes and results. But the production of such a history requires a rare combination of mental gifts; the vivid imagination required in scenic description is not usually found associated with philosophic depth. Perhaps Green's "History of England" and Bancroft's "History of the United States" are as good examples of the highest type of historical writing as can be found.

There is a very noticeable difference between the methods of ancient and modern historians. The former, it has been said, were *artistic*, and the latter *sociological*. These terms, while aiming at the facts, are neither accurate nor happy. The ancient historians, as Herodotus and Thucydides, aimed at a pleasing narrative. To attain this end, neither an exhaustive investigation of facts nor a conscientious abstention from fiction was necessary. Hence we find the works of the one filled with impossible events, and those of the other with orations confessedly fictitious; but in both cases the introduction of legend and fiction has imparted an interest that would otherwise be lacking in their works.

With modern historians, especially in the presence of the existing dominant scientific spirit, it is different. The first requisite of historical writing at the present day is absolute truth, as nearly as it can be ascertained. The modern historian is not allowed to draw upon his imagination for facts; he is held to a laborious and exhaustive investigation of the sources of information. He writes out of abundant stores of accurate information; and not content with the



mere chronological narration of facts, he seeks beneath them the principles or laws that bind them together as a whole. Modern history, particularly that of the last fifty years, has a breadth, accuracy, and depth, of which the historians of Greece and Rome hardly dreamed.

64. *Biography.* Biography is that department of history that gives the facts and events of an individual life. It is at once an interesting and important form of history. We have a natural desire to know the lives and characters of the men who have in any way risen above their fellows, and been associated with great social, literary, or political movements. While great men are in large measure the creatures of mighty movements, they at the same time give direction to historic development. There is truth in Carlyle's idea that universal history "is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked there."

There are three general types of biography, corresponding to the three kinds of history. The first is *narrative* biography, which is concerned chiefly with an orderly statement of the leading facts—birth, parentage, education, marriage, and achievements—in a person's life. The second is *scenic* or *descriptive* biography, which aims at interest by means of characteristic incidents or anecdotes. The third is *philosophic*, which tries to trace the relation of a person's life to the age in which he lived, and to estimate the influence he exerted on his own and subsequent ages. The first is more common, the second more interesting, the third more instructive; but it is evident that the best biographies present a judicious combination of all three types.

The first essential of biography, as of history in general, is truth. When we are studying a man's life we want to know the facts; otherwise we shall not be able to judge correctly of his life and work. There are two principal sources of error in writing biography: the first is ignorance, which leads to the omission of important particulars or to a misinterpretation of those that are known; the other source of error is prejudice for or against the person whose life is portrayed. This prejudice leads, on the one hand, to such a presentation of the biographical facts as to magnify the merits of the man; and on the other, it leads to such a suppression or distortion of the facts as to detract from his just deserts. Both faults are illustrated in Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," which, though excellent in the

main, are sometimes defective for lack of research, and colored by the writer's strong Tory and Anglican sentiments.

*Autobiography* is the story of a man's life written by himself. It is perhaps the most interesting form of biography. In autobiography the writer has the advantage of an intimate acquaintance not only with the outward facts but also with the secret influences and motives by which his life has been controlled. It takes us, as it were, behind the scenes of history; but at the same time there is inevitably the error that springs from undue partiality. And though men like Rousseau, Gibbon, and Franklin attempt to divest themselves of this prejudice, and even succeed in a remarkable degree, there is reason to suspect the omission of facts and motives that would reflect too unfavorably upon the character.

A *diary* is a record of one's daily occupations and experiences. It sustains the same relation to biography that chronicles or annals do to history: it furnishes the materials out of which biography is made. When the diarist is a man of prominence, as in the case of Dean Swift, his journal throws an interesting light not only upon his own life but also upon the times in which he lives. It introduces us to men in the freedom and frankness of private life. When the diary is kept, not with a view to subsequent publication but merely to aid one's memory, it becomes a valuable record of facts.

65. *Some Criteria.* In judging a historical work three principal points are to be taken into consideration.

(1) The first is concerned with the mode of execution. Is the outward form of the work such as is required by the laws of art? The diction should be conformable to the subject, and marshaled in correct, varied, and forcible sentences. The style should bend to suit the changing themes. The interest and impressiveness of a work, as may be seen in Macaulay and Irving, depend in no small measure upon its literary quality. Furthermore, there should be movement and symmetry. The progress of events should be followed in a natural order, and the place and treatment of each should be according to its relative importance. As in a drama, there should be a beginning, middle, and end.

(2) The second point to be considered in a history is the subject-matter. Obviously this is of prime importance, for the object of history is the preservation and communication of truth. In weighing

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

a historical work, we should consider both the writer's sources of information and the use he has made of them. Has he gone to original and trustworthy sources of information or has he taken his materials at secondhand? Has he given them thorough or only partial examination? Has he well digested his materials, so that he writes from the fullness of assimilated knowledge, or does he present only the raw materials of history? While delightful and useful histories may be written largely of secondhand materials, it is evident that monumental historic achievements, like Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" or Carlyle's "Oliver Cromwell," must be based on exhaustive original investigation. And however useful may be the works that serve up undigested materials, they cannot be regarded as constituting history in a literary sense, for they lack the element of art.

(3) The third point to be considered in judging a historical work is the personality of the author. What is his mental caliber? He should have the breadth of view that enables him to grasp the subject in its entirety, and to coördinate the facts according to their relative importance. Otherwise he will dwell on insignificant details, lack largeness of movement, and, instead of sweeping forward like a river, spread out aimlessly like a dreary marsh. He should have the breadth of culture that will enable him to weigh the facts he uses. This requires familiarity with various systems of belief. Whether a theologian or a scientist, a Protestant or a Romanist, he should be able to do justice to the facts and motives of the opposite party. His love of truth should be supreme. He should have soundness of judgment in connection with a clear logical sense. He must not jump at conclusions, but base them on sufficient evidence. And then the mood, attitude, and prejudices should be ascertained. This constitutes his standpoint. Most writers have convictions or belong to schools of belief that consciously or unconsciously influence their work. A skeptic like Gibbon could hardly do justice to the rise and progress of Christianity.

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is prose? How is it distinguished from poetry? What is said of prose in this age? Name the principal forms of prose. Which do not come within the scope of this book?

2. What is history? On what does it rest? How is it different from mythology? from fiction? What is the relation of history to change?

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

What is said of history in English literature? What threefold division of history is there in regard to time? Name the limits of each. As to subject-matter, how is history divided? What division is based on the sources of information? Define a chronicle; annals. As to method, what threefold division of history is there? Define narrative, descriptive, and philosophic history. What method does the best history follow? What difference is there between ancient and modern methods in history? What is the first requisite of historic writing to-day?

3. What is biography? Why is it interesting? What was Carlyle's idea? What three different types exist? What is the chief requisite? What are the two principal sources of error? What is autobiography? What advantage has autobiography? what source of error? What is a diary? Of what use is a diary?

4. In judging a history, what is the first point to be considered? What is required by the laws of art? What is said of style? What is meant by symmetry? What is the second point to be considered? What two inquiries should be made? On what are the greatest historical works based? What is the third point to be considered? What should be the historian's mental equipment? Why is it important to know his fundamental philosophical or religious beliefs?

### NOTE

In place of illustrative and practical selections, as given in earlier chapters, it is suggested that the student be referred to a few leading works in the department of history. Among those that might be used, apart from popular text-books on the subject, are Macaulay's "History of England, " Green's "History of the English People, " Carlyle's "French Revolution, " Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico, " Motley's "Rise of the Dutch Republic, " Irving's "Life of Goldsmith, " the autobiographies of Franklin, Gibbon, and Ruskin, the diaries of Pepys and Evelyn, Johnson's "Lives of the Poets, " volumes from the English Men of Letters series, the American Men of Letters series, the American Statesmen series, or any other works to which the student may have access.

The volumes assigned by the teacher should be studied with reference to diction and style as presented in Part Second of this work. In addition to this, the narrative, descriptive, and philosophical passages should be distinguished. By an analysis of a



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

single chapter or of the whole book, the symmetry and completeness of the author's treatment may be judged. The writer's purpose and standpoint should, if possible, be ascertained, and the effect upon the work pointed out. His mood, character, and intellectual gifts should be traced as reflected in his work. The results of this investigation might be presented in the form of a written critique.

CHAPTER XI

ESSAYS AND ORATORY

66. *Essays.* An essay is a brief dissertation on some special subject. It aims to present its statements in a clear and interesting manner, and this careful regard for a finished form brings the essay within the scope of literature in the strict sense of the word. The essay does not usually aim at an elaborate discussion of a subject in all its phases, and it is thus distinguished from the treatise. Its origin dates from the French author Montaigne in the latter part of the sixteenth century; but since the vast multiplication of periodicals in recent years, the essay has become a prominent department of literature. There is scarcely any subject of human interest that may not be discussed in an essay.

The principal forms of the essay are as follows:

- (1) The *tract*, which is usually a brief discussion of some religious or moral subject.
- (2) The *editorial*, which is an editor's discussion of some theme of public interest.
- (3) The *review* or *critique*, which is a critical examination and discussion of some literary work.

Two general and well-defined types of essays may be profitably distinguished. The first may be called the *personal* essay. It allows great freedom of treatment, and in large measure reflects the personality of the author. It has something of the ease and charm of conversation. The essays of Montaigne, of Addison, and of Lamb are of this personal type.

The other kind may be designated as the *didactic* essay. Its aim is the impartation of knowledge and the formation of public opinion. The personality of the author is concealed behind his statements and arguments. He does not write in the first person. In our best writing of this kind there is a careful treatment of the subject.

The method of the essay is chiefly exposition. It uses narration and description only in a subordinate way. The essayist usually has some

information to impart, some argument to present, or some conclusion to be reached. His purpose naturally determines the mode of treatment. Generally there will be a beginning or introduction, a middle containing the body of treatment, and a conclusion. Very frequently, however, the writer plunges at once into his subject without the formality of an introduction.

In estimating the worth of an essay three things are to be chiefly taken into account. The first is its form, including diction, sentences, paragraphs, and arrangement. The various points brought forward should be in a natural order, and each should have the prominence to which its relative importance entitles it. There should be movement or progress in the treatment, and the essay should gain in weight as it advances to the conclusion.

The second point is the subject-matter of the essay. As the essay is not intended to be exhaustive, there should be judgment in the selection of points to be presented. A skillful writer will be recognized as much by what he leaves in the inkstand as by what he says. In the presentation of facts there should be a conscientious regard for truth. The author's originality, force, culture will be reflected in the matter and manner of his discussion.

Then, last of all, the writer's mood and standpoint should be considered. Is he serious, satirical, humorous? Is he writing from the standpoint of party or sect, or is he seeking only to know and present the truth? Is he thoroughly acquainted with the subject that he discusses? Only as we answer questions like these can we enter into full sympathy with an author and form a just and adequate conception of his work.

67. *Oratory.* Oratory is that form of discourse that is primarily intended not to be read but to be spoken. Its object is mingled instruction and persuasion, and it may be defined as instruction suffused with feeling. In its lofty and impassioned forms oratory attains to eloquence, —that quality which profoundly moves the hearts and wills of the hearers.

But it is well to recognize the source of eloquence, which is to be distinguished from bombast and fustian. Eloquence is not a trick of rhetoric; it springs from the moral character of the speaker, from his gifts and attainments, and from the subject and occasion. "Mere eloquence," said Webster, "does not consist in speech. It cannot be

brought from far. Labor and learning may toil for it, but they will toil in vain. Words and phrases may be marshaled in every way, but they cannot compass it. It must exist in the man, in the subject, and in the occasion. Affected passion, intense expression, the pomp of declamation, all may aspire to it; they cannot reach it. It comes, if it come at all, like the outbreking of a fountain from the earth, or the bursting of volcanic fires, with spontaneous, original, native force. "

Oratory is variously divided, but perhaps no other division is better than that of Aristotle. He distinguishes three species of oratory:

(1) Deliberative oratory, which has its place in deliberative bodies. In Parliament or Congress it is concerned with questions of legal enactment, finance, or administration; in religious bodies, with ecclesiastical questions; in scientific bodies, with questions of science. At the present day a large part of oratory is deliberative in character.

(2) Judicial or forensic oratory, which is heard before courts of justice. It is chiefly concerned with human conduct in relation to law, and its aim is to determine what is legally right and just.

(3) Demonstrative oratory is chiefly occupied with the presentation of abstract or practical truth. It is heard in lectures, sermons, and other public addresses. It draws its themes from any department of human knowledge, and aims at imparting instruction, uplifting character, or influencing conduct.

A finished oration is a work of art. Ancient rhetoricians distinguished six parts, which may still be found in some elaborate specimens of pulpit or forensic eloquence. These six parts were (1) the exordium or introduction, (2) the division of the subject, (3) the statement of what is to be established, (4) the argumentation, (5) the appeal to the feelings, and (6) the peroration or conclusion.

It is evident that this scheme for an oration is, as a rule, much too artificial and elaborate for use at the present day. Modern intelligence and modern intensity of life demand greater brevity and directness. An audience of the present time rarely has patience with a discourse of more than an hour, and it generally prefers one of half that length. In a modern discourse we may generally recognize a threefold division:



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

(1) The introduction, which points out the relation of the subject to the occasion, or otherwise prepares the audience better to appreciate the discussion that is to follow. It should be natural, and not so lengthy as to be out of keeping with the main body of the discourse.

(2) The discussion of the subject in hand. This consists of a statement of the theme and the various facts, arguments, and illustrations that are designed to throw light upon it and establish its truth. This is the main part of the discourse, and great care should be exercised in the statement of facts and the arrangement of arguments. Personal conviction should be back of what is said, for without this tone of sincerity the most brilliant rhetoric and eloquent declamation will be in vain.

(3) The conclusion, in which the results of the discussion are presented. It should be clear and claim no more than has been fairly established in the preceding discussion. On the basis of the truth previously presented it may contain an appeal to the feelings and the will, urging the course of action that has been shown to be advisable, wise, or obligatory.

Argumentation may seek to establish the truth of a proposition in four different ways:

(1) There may be the introduction of testimony. By testimony is meant the statements of actual observers or witnesses. It rests on experience, and may be given orally or in writing; hence we have *oral* and *written* testimony.

(2) A proposition may be supported or established by analogy. Reasoning from analogy is that process by which we infer that when two objects resemble each other in several known particulars they will also resemble each other in a certain unknown particular. The planet Mars, for example, resembles the earth in shape, motion, atmosphere, change of seasons, and relation to the sun; and from the resemblance in these known particulars some persons have inferred that, like the earth, it is also inhabited.

Analogical reasoning has a prominent place in our mental operations. Analogy lies at the basis of simile, metaphor, and personification, which are often used in argumentation. We frequently use analogical processes in the practical affairs of life, inferring, for example, that there will be rain to-day because the

temperature, appearance of the clouds, and the condition of the atmosphere resemble those of a rainy day last week.

But it is to be observed that the arguments from analogy give us at the best only probable truth. The degree of probability depends upon the nature and number of the resemblances upon which the conclusion is based. There must be no point of dissimilarity that would disprove the conclusion inferred.

(3) We may establish a conclusion by an array of facts. This is called inductive reasoning. We observe, for example, that A, B, C, and all other men of the past, so far as our knowledge goes, have died; and in view of these individual cases we draw the comprehensive conclusion that all men are mortal.

But this mode of reasoning, common and indispensable as it is, needs to be employed with caution. There is always danger of inferring more than the facts warrant. When the inference is based on an inadequate induction of facts, the process is called "jumping at a conclusion,"—a mistake that is frequently made. Even large inductions are not always safe. We might conclude, for instance, that, because the bulldog, hound, mastiff, setter, spaniel, terrier, and other species we have known, are accustomed to bark, therefore all dogs bark. Yet this apparently well-founded conclusion is erroneous, for there is a non-barking species in Greenland.

(4) Again, we may establish a truth by showing that it comes within an established and recognized principle. This process is known as deductive reasoning. The principle on which deductive reasoning depends is the self-evident truth that "whatever is true of the whole is true of the parts." Starting from the general truth that all men are mortal, we may conclude that A, B, and C are mortal.

The general truth that supplies the basis of deductive reasoning may be taken from various sources. Sometimes the truth is self-evident or intuitive, as the axioms that lie at the basis of mathematical reasoning. Sometimes they are truths arrived at by inductive processes. Sometimes they are maxims that have gained the assent of mankind; and again, they are the statements of an accepted philosophy, creed, code, or other recognized source of authority.

In deductive reasoning two points need particular attention: (1) the fundamental principle on which the argument is based should be

well established or recognized as true; and (2) the conclusion should necessarily follow from the truth assumed in the beginning, and not embrace more than is duly warranted by it.

The general structure of an oration is determined by its object. There should be, in large measure, simplicity, unity, and progress. The language should be within the comprehension of the average hearer; the sentences, as a rule, should be brief and forcible; and the general style should be concrete rather than abstract. All parts of the oration should be bound together by the single truth and purpose at which the orator aims. The arguments should not be abstruse but clear and striking. Irrelevant matter of every kind, no matter how brilliant in itself, should be excluded; and every fact and principle should be scrupulously correct. Understatement is better than overstatement. The orator should continually advance toward his conclusion; the auditor should feel himself borne along not on a circling eddy but on the bosom of a full, strong current of thought and feeling.

It was Cicero who said that the orator should know everything. However desirable such attainments might be, they are no longer possible; but the orator should have a wide range of culture and experience. This is necessary to give breadth and proportion to his outlook upon the world. In addition to this general culture he should, as far as possible, be master of his subject; and to this end he should bestow upon his discourse careful and even laborious preparation. Without these requisites the orator is apt to prove uninteresting, inconclusive, and unsuccessful.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is an essay? What brings it within the range of art? How is it distinguished from a treatise? With whom did it originate? What gives it prominence now? Name its principal forms. What is a tract? an editorial? a critique or review? Name two types of essay. What is the character of the *personal* essay? Give examples. Define the *didactic* essay. What is the method of the essay? What parts may usually be distinguished? What three things are to be considered in estimating the worth of an essay? How should the successive points be presented? How is a skillful writer recognized? What is said of the essayist's mood and standpoint?

2. What is oratory? What is its object? What is eloquence? Whence does it rise? What is the substance of Webster's view? How did

## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

Aristotle divide oratory? What is *deliberative* oratory? *judicial* or *forensic*? *demonstrative*? What parts were anciently distinguished? What is said of this scheme? What three parts are now generally recognized? What is the purpose of the introduction? What is said of the discussion? What is said of the speaker's convictions? What is the nature of the conclusion? What four methods of proof may be used? What is meant by testimony? What are the two kinds of testimony? What is meant by reasoning from analogy? Illustrate. What is said of its use? What sort of truth is furnished by analogical reasoning? On what does the degree of its probability depend? What is inductive reasoning? Illustrate. What is meant by "jumping at a conclusion"? Give a case of erroneous conclusion. What is deductive reasoning? Illustrate. Whence may come the general truth lying at the basis of deduction? What two points must be attended to carefully? What qualities should an oration have? Why should the diction and sentence structure be simple? What should give unity to the oration? What is said of irrelevant matter? of movement or progress? What was Cicero's view of an orator's attainments? What is the advantage of broad culture? What is said of special preparation?

### NOTE

In place of brief illustrative and practical selections, it is recommended that the student be referred to complete essays and orations. In addition to current literature, in which will be found essays of various kinds, Bacon's "Essays," the papers of the *Spectator*, Lamb's "Essays of Elia," and the essays of Macaulay, De Quincey, Carlyle, and Emerson may be used. Under the head of oratory, apart from contemporary speeches and sermons, the student might be referred to Burke's "Speech on American Taxation," Webster's "Bunker Hill Orations," Patrick Henry's "Speech before the Virginia Convention," Emerson's "Representative Men," and Carlyle's "Heroes and Hero Worship."

The essays assigned should be investigated as to form, matter, and mood or purpose. Such questions as the following may be answered: What kind of essay is it? Is it personal or didactic? What is the theme? What is the writer's aim? What is his mood? What constitutes the introduction? the body of the essay? the conclusion? What may be said of the diction, sentences, and style? What is the order of thought as determined by analysis? Is there symmetry? Is there movement? Is irrelevant matter excluded? Is the treatment lit



## Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism

up by humor? Is there breadth of view? What is the writer's standpoint? Is there care and self-restraint of statement?

In the case of a speech the same questions may be asked in reference to form, content, mood, or purpose. In addition the student may determine the class of oratory to which the speech belongs. He may ask such questions as the following: Is it eloquent in any part? What is the mode of argumentation? What is the form of proof? Is the argument sound and convincing? The student should analyze the speech, in whole or in part, and make a synopsis of its principal propositions and proofs. The result may be presented in a written or oral critique.

CHAPTER XII

NATURE AND CLASSIFICATION OF FICTION

68. *Definition.* Fiction is that form of prose narrative in which the characters, scenes, and incidents are partly or entirely imaginary. In its highest form it is a sort of prose epic; and Homer's "Odyssey" finds a parallel in Fénelon's "Telemachus." In the arrangement of characters and incidents to form a plot, fiction resembles the drama; and at the present time every notable work of fiction is apt to make its way to the stage. Like poetry in general, fiction has its principal source in the creative imagination, which, working on the basis of experience, modifies or produces character, scene, and incident.

A common division of fiction, though not consistently observed, is the *novel* and the *romance*. The novel is a fictitious narrative in which the characters and incidents are in keeping with the ordinary train of events in society. Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield," which brings before us the simple life of a country pastor, may be taken as a type. A romance is a fictitious narrative in which the characters and scenes and incidents are uncommon, improbable, or marvelous. Scott's "Ivanhoe" may be taken as a representative of the best type of romance. The one form of fiction may readily shade into the other, and it becomes difficult in some cases to determine the classification; but in general the two species are clearly marked.

69. *Romanticism.* During the past century there were two far-reaching movements in the field of fiction. Both came in the character of a reaction; taken together they have given greater breadth and depth to this department of literature. The first movement, which dates near the beginning of the last century, is known as *romanticism*. It was a reaction against the formal and the conventional. Romanticism may be defined as liberalism in literature; it is a breaking away from authority and a return to nature. It manifested itself in two particulars both in fiction and poetry: first, there was greater freedom in subject, form, and character; and second, there was a return to the past, particularly to an idealized age of chivalry in the Middle Ages. Scott was the great leader of the romantic movement both in poetry and in fiction. In their wide range of character and incident, and in their idealization of the past, the Waverley Novels are in general perfect types of romanticism.

70. *Realism*. Realism came about the middle of the Victorian era as a reaction against romanticism. It was born of the scientific spirit, which rendered the public dissatisfied with fanciful pictures of past ages and with the impossibilities of wild romance. Realism, as the word indicates, adheres to reality. Discarding what is idealistic or unreal in characters and situations, it aims at being true to life. All the great novelists of this period—Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot—were in the best sense of the word realists.

As an effort to represent life as it is, the worth of realism must be acknowledged. In its proper application it places the novel on an immovable basis. While idealism shows us how life might be or ought to be, realism shows how it actually is. Unfortunately, realistic writers have not, in many cases, been true to their fundamental principles. The great continental leaders of realism—Tolstoi, Zola, Ibsen—have been tainted with a fatal pessimism. Realists of this type seem to see only one side of life, —the darker side of sin and wretchedness and despair. They often describe what is coarse, impure, obscene. No doubt their pictures are true as far as they go; but the fatal defect of their work is that it does not reflect life as a whole. It does not portray the pure and noble and happy side of life, which is just as real as the other.

Except in the hands of genius, realism is apt to be dull. It gives us uninteresting photographs. There are times when we do not care so much for instruction as for amusement and recreation. This fact opens a legitimate field for the imaginative story-teller. There is to-day a decided reaction against realism in the form of what has been called the *new romanticism*. It does not present to us elaborate studies of actual life, but entertains us with an interesting or exciting story. Stevenson, Weyman, Hope, and Doyle have been leaders in this movement, and some of the most widely read novels of the past few years have belonged to this new romanticism.

71. *Idealism*. The influence of idealism in fiction should be recognized. It may tinge the work both of romanticism and of realism. It is, perhaps, to be regarded as an atmosphere rather than as a method. The aim of idealism is to soften the hard realities of life. It in a measure portrays things not as they are but as they should be; and as far as it definitely pursues this course it presents a contrast to realism. It naturally chooses for the most part the nobler types of character; and to the villains that may be introduced it metes out in due time a merited punishment. The trials of life are brought to

happy issue. The hero and heroine, both somewhat above the characters of ordinary life, at length triumph over all the obstacles that beset their path. Kept within due bounds, idealism gives a hopeful and uplifting tone to fiction; but without careful restraint it is in danger of becoming false and injurious. It presents to the young a caricature of the world, and exposes them, at a later period, to bitter and dangerous disillusionment. Among our greatest novelists an idealistic tendency is very perceptible in Scott and Dickens.

*72. Component Elements.* In every important work of fiction there are six things to be considered, namely, the characters, the incidents, the environment, the plot, the purpose, and the view or philosophy of life. The first three elements constitute the materials out of which the novelist builds his work; the last three supply the general plan by which he builds it. The excellence of the work, as in architecture, depends both on the character of the materials and on the manner in which they are put together. When Solomon constructed his famous temple he not only used cedar and gold but also joined them together according to a wise design and noble purpose. These various elements are worthy of separate consideration.

(1) The characters of a novel are of prime importance. As in actual life, they give tone to the society to which we are introduced. They should be clearly individualized, as in the drama, and maintain throughout a reasonable consistency. They may be taken from any class of society; and writers of large creative genius, like Shakespeare, Scott, Dickens, Balzac, will be distinguished both for the number and for the variety of their characters. It is not enough that the characters be described in their outward appearance and experiences. In all profounder work, as in George Eliot, there will be an unveiling of the hidden springs of motive and disposition. The great potentialities of human nature both for good and evil will be brought to light, and thus the mimic world of the novelist will reflect the life of the great real world in its more tragic aspects.

(2) By the incidents of a novel we mean the acts and experiences of the characters. They make up the connected and progressive story. The incidents may be as varied, as the occurrences of human life, sweeping the whole range of toil, sorrow, and joy. They may be either comic or tragic. The interest of a work of fiction depends largely upon its incidents. Separately they may be entertaining, absorbing, or thrilling; and taken together in their sequence they may carry us forward irresistibly to the conclusion. They should be



in keeping with the time and place, and the several acts of the personages should be in harmony with their character and culture.

(3) As in real life, the personages of a novel or romance live and move in the midst of an environment. They are placed in the midst of circumstances, upon which they act and by which they are acted upon. They may live on land or sea, in the country or in the city, amid the wildness of unsubdued forests or the culture of long-established communities. They may be surrounded by intelligence and luxury or by ignorance and squalor.

The environment is brought before us by description, which necessarily constitutes no inconsiderable part of every work of fiction. The descriptive passages should be true to fact, and graphic enough to enable the reader to picture the scenes in his mind; but they should not be so long drawn as to encumber or impede the story. Description is subordinate in fiction; instead of being an end in itself, its purpose is to throw light upon the characters and incidents of the story.

(4) By plot, we mean the manner in which the incidents of a story are arranged with reference to the final issue. The incidents may be loosely connected or they may be so skillfully ordered as to arouse the reader's breathless interest. A skillful plot presupposes dramatic talent. This is not always found in union with a strong creative imagination; and thus it happens that some of our greatest novelists, as Thackeray and George Eliot, are defective in dramatic plots. While a skillfully arranged plot is not an essential element in a work of fiction, it is always a source of interest and power.

(5) Every work of fiction has an aim or purpose. Sometimes the author merely aims at telling an interesting story which has no other significance than to provoke a smile or a tear. Sometimes it may be intended to illustrate a period in history or the manners of a particular locality. Sometimes it is designed to throw light on some phase of human character or human experience. And again, it may be a vehicle for conveying some form of teaching or for illustrating the growth of culture and character. In studying a work of fiction the purpose should be clearly apprehended, for the merit of a novel or romance depends in a measure upon the author's aim and his degree of success in realizing it.

(6) Every work of fiction, consciously or unconsciously to the author, is apt to embody a particular view or philosophy of life. Every thoughtful person has convictions in regard to God, nature, and man. He may believe in a personal deity or an unconscious force as the source of all things. He may think of nature as a creation or as a product of impersonal natural law. He may think of man as an immortal being or as a creature whose existence ceases with death. But whatever may be an author's fundamental beliefs, they will inevitably color his work.

73. *Kinds of Novels.* Novels may be divided into various classes according to subject or method of treatment. As to method, we have already had the general division of romanticism and realism. Another generic classification has been proposed: first, *novels of life*, which include the works portraying both past and contemporary life; and second, *novels of idea*, which include didactic and artistic works of fiction. The didactic novel discusses some practical problem or advances some social or moral theory; the artistic novel subordinates the story to perfection of form.

It will be helpful to the student to distinguish the following classes:

(1) The *society novel* is devoted to a portrayal of existing men and manners. The field is a wide one. The characters may be taken from any class of society. The society novel may bring before us, as in Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," what is known as fashionable life. It may again, as in George Eliot's "Adam Bede" or Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield," introduce us to the lives of plain people. It may acquaint us, as in Du Maurier's "Trilby," with the Bohemian or artist class in our great cities. It may deal, as in Dickens's "Oliver Twist" or Bulwer's "Paul Clifford," with the criminal class. In short, there is no class of society or type of character that may not become the subject of treatment in novels of this class.

(2) *Local novels* are devoted to the portrayal of the life and manners of a well-marked locality. They are social novels within a restricted field. Differences of race, of language, of pursuit, and of intelligence, as seen in particular localities, are reflected in novels of this kind. There is scarcely any portion of England that has not been described in some work of fiction. Charlotte Brontë brings Yorkshire scenery and character before us in "Shirley"; George Eliot portrays the scenes of her native Warwick in "The Mill on the Floss"; Blackmore's

"Lorna Doone" portrays the scenery, life, and language of Devonshire.

America has afforded a very rich field for the local novel. Not a few of its choicest works belong to this class. Scarcely any part of our wide country or any special phase of its life has escaped the eyes of the enterprising story-teller. In his "Grandissimes," for example, George W. Cable gives us a glimpse of the Creole life of Louisiana. In the "Hoosier Schoolmaster" Edward Eggleston describes pioneer life in Indiana. In "Gabriel Conroy" Bret Harte brings before us the wild and lawless life of California a half century ago. In various works Miss Murfree has described the dwellers in the Tennessee mountains. New England and the South have been portrayed by various writers.

(3) The *historical novel* is devoted to the description of life in the past. It should be based on a careful study of the period to be portrayed. It may deal with the scenes of a hundred years ago or it may go back a thousand years before the Christian era.

No other department of fiction has a prouder array of great books. Historical fiction has gone hand in hand with a revived interest in historical and archæological research. The greatest of all historical novelists is Scott, whose Waverley series covers the centuries between the crusades, which "Ivanhoe" describes, and the rebellion of Prince Edward Charles in 1745, which "Waverley" describes. But other great names—German, English, American—belong to this class of fiction. "Uarda," for example, by George Ebers, describes life in Egypt a thousand years before Christ. Kingsley's "Hypatia" takes us back to the city of Alexandria in the fifth century of our era. In the "Last Days of Pompeii" Bulwer Lytton describes the life of the Roman city at the time of its destruction. George Eliot's "Romola" portrays the spirit and manners of the city of Florence in the days of Savonarola and the revival of learning. "Ben Hur" by Lew Wallace is a tale of the Christ. "The Schönberg-Cotta Family" by Mrs. Elizabeth Charles is a graphic portrayal of movements and scenes in Germany at the period of the Reformation.

Recently there has been a notable revival in historical fiction. It has come, perhaps, as a reaction against a hard realism and empty romanticism. It probably strikes its roots in the desire for knowledge which at the present time is so generally characteristic of the American people. Not a few of the recent books of phenomenal

popularity—Churchill's "Richard Carvel, " Miss Johnson's "To Have and to Hold, " Ford's "Janice Meredith, " Page's "Red Rock, " Thompson's "Alice of Old Vincennes"—deal with interesting periods in the history of our country.

(4) The *problem or purpose novel* has been prominent in recent fiction. It has been a natural product of this restless, intellectual age. Fiction has been made the medium for the discussion of political, social, and religious problems. Not a few of them, as Bellamy's socialistic "Looking Backward, " have had an enormous circulation. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by Mrs. Stowe was a severe arraignment of slavery, and exerted a strong influence in molding the sentiment of a large part of our country. Recent theological unrest is reflected in Mrs. Ward's "Robert Elsmere" and in Margaret Deland's "John Ward, Preacher. " The nature and influence of labor organizations are presented in Charles Reade's "Put Yourself in His Place, " and in the anonymous American story "The Bread Winners. " Hall Caine's "Christian" involves a serious indictment against the church in England. Disraeli traversed the field of English politics in his "Coningsby" and "Endymion, " as did Trollope in his "Phineas Finn" and "Prime Minister. " In his "Guardian Angel" and "Elsie Venner" Oliver Wendell Holmes traces the effects of heredity, a subject previously handled by Hawthorne in his "House of Seven Gables. " In this way we see that nearly every great practical question of general interest may be discussed or portrayed in fiction.

(5) The *love story* and the *story of adventure* embrace a considerable though unambitious part of fiction. The love story deals with courtship and marriage. As a rule, after encountering more or less opposition or difficulty, the lovers are at last happily united. A thread of love usually runs through all the more ambitious types of fiction, for it is a source of universal interest that cannot lightly be set aside; but in the love story it is the central and dominant interest.

The story of adventure consists of a succession of interesting or thrilling incidents. The type of this species of fiction is Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe. " The new romantic movement already referred to lays much stress on a rapid succession of exciting incidents. This is illustrated by Hope's "Prisoner of Zenda" or by most of R. L. Stevenson's works, of which "Kidnapped" and "The Master of Ballantrae" may be taken as fair examples.



(6) *Naval fiction* belongs to the sea. It is an interesting field, though somewhat limited in its range of character and incident. The sea itself, with its magnificent and changing moods, is a sublime object. The restricted life on shipboard—the telling of yarns beneath the starlit skies, the spirit of mingled superstition and daring, the prompt and brave activities attending a storm, and, above all, the excitement and dangers of battle—has for the landsman a peculiar charm.

Novelists of the sea are not numerous; for, in order to be in the best sense successful, the writer must have had a seafaring experience. James Fenimore Cooper, who had been in the navy, criticised Scott's "Pirate" as the work of a landsman. He undertook to produce a genuine story of the sea in his "Pilot," which, whatever else may be its defects, is correct in sailor's lingo and briny flavor. He was no less successful in "The Red Rover," the scenes of which antedate the Revolution. But the prince of marine novelists is unquestionably Frederick Marryat, whose "Peter Simple," "Jacob Faithful," and "Mr. Midshipman Easy" are perhaps unsurpassed in their sphere.

(7) The *psychologic novel* is concerned chiefly with mental analysis. It traces the workings of the soul under different circumstances and different influences. It follows the character in its ascent to higher goodness or in its descent to lower degradation. Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," for example, is a powerful exhibition of the duality—the brute and the divinity—in human nature. Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," while in one sense a historical novel, is an incomparable study of the human soul under the weight of guilt and remorse. Throughout George Eliot's novels there is a constant portrayal of mental and moral conditions that give to her works an unusual depth and power. Her method has been justly called psychologic realism. Under this head we may place what has been called the "art and culture novel," the object of which is to exhibit the gradual development of individual character by means of a changing environment. The type of this sort of fiction is Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister."

The short story, which our magazines have rendered so popular in recent years, is a novel in miniature. It paints on a small canvas but with exceeding delicacy. Like the novel or the romance, it may find its materials in any age or in any class of society; and in its general method it conforms to the laws of fiction in general.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

68. What is fiction? How does it resemble the drama? What is said of dramatized novels? Define *novel* and *romance*. Give examples of each. 69. What is *romanticism*? When did it manifest itself? In what two particulars? 70. What is *realism*? Whence did it spring? What are its merits? What tendency of realistic writers is noted? What is the danger of realism? What is meant by the *new romanticism*? Mention some of its representative writers. 71. What is the aim of *idealism*? How does it do this? What two great novelists show idealistic tendencies? 72. What six things are to be noted in every novel? What two groups are distinguished among them? On what does the excellence of a novel depend? What is said of the characters? Whence may they be drawn? How are great writers distinguished? What characterizes profound novels? What is meant by incidents? What is said of their variety? How should they be arranged? What is meant by environment? What environments may be used? How may they be brought before us? What should be the character of this description? What is its place? What is meant by plot? What is presupposed in a skillful plot? What great writers are lacking in dramatic power? What purposes may be aimed at? Why should the purpose be apprehended? About what have thoughtful persons convictions? What is the effect of these convictions? Why should the writer's aim or purpose be understood?

73. How may novels and romances be divided? What are *novels of life*? *novels of idea*? What seven classes are distinguished? What is a *society novel*? What may it portray? What are *local novels*? What is said of them in America? Mention some well-known local novels. What is a *historical novel*? On what should it be based? What is said of historical fiction? Who is the greatest of historical novelists? Mention some others. What is said of recent tendencies? Mention some recent historical novels. What is meant by *problem* or *purpose novels*? Illustrate by various examples. What is the nature of the *love story*? of the *story of adventure*? Illustrate. What is *naval fiction*? Why are sea novelists not numerous? What is said of Cooper? Who is the chief of marine novelists? With what is the *psychologic novel* principally concerned? Give examples. What gives George Eliot's novels their depth? What is said of the short story? To what laws is it subject?

### NOTE

As illustrative and practical exercises, let the student criticise several pieces of fiction assigned by the teacher. For this purpose any of the standard or popular works mentioned in the text may be selected, or any others to which the student may have access.

After classifying the work and determining its style, the student should investigate it according to its six component elements, — characters, incidents, environment, plot, purpose, and views of life. The points to be investigated under each head are suggested in the text.

As points of special interest, he may inquire into the origin of the work and the sources from which its materials were derived. This investigation will frequently reveal, as in the case of Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, Dickens, and George Eliot, interesting autobiographic details.

The results of this investigation may be presented in a written critique, in which the value of the work as a whole, in the light of correct æsthetic and critical principles, should be determined. It will sometimes be found that novels of wide popularity are destitute of great intrinsic excellence.

















La Vergne, TN USA  
24 November 2009

165202LV00004B/112/P



9 781406 561104



Prof. Franklin Verzelius Newton Painter (1852-1931) was the American author of: *Poets of the South* (1903), *Elementary Guide to Literary Criticism* (1903), *A History of Education*, *History of English Literature* and *Introduction to American Literature*.

"The aim of the present work, as is indicated by its name, is to help the young student in literary criticism. It is a sort of laboratory manual, in which he will find specific direction for a comprehensive analysis of the principal kinds of literature. It is intended to show him the various points in relation to form, content, and spirit, to which in succession he is to devote his attention. It is hoped that the book will give definiteness and delight to literary study, which, for lack of such a guide, has so often been vague, unsatisfactory, and discouraging."



[www.dodopress.co.uk](http://www.dodopress.co.uk)  
[dodo@dodopress.co.uk](mailto:dodo@dodopress.co.uk)

*Dodo Press specialises in the publication and distribution of rare and out-of-print books.*

ISBN 978-1-4065-6110-4



9 781406 561104

90000

KQ-241-962

